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**Hands-on Modernism: representations of the
hand in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and
modernist literature 1914-1939**

Juliet Rose Yates

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ABSTRACT

The fragmentation endemic to modernism poses the difficult question of how we read the modernist body. In this thesis, I propose a new critical approach in response to this question – theoretical partialism – whereby looking at the particular and reading the representation of the hand as a signifier offers further insight into wider concerns such as, female subjectivity, performativity, sexuality and societal positioning. Because the hand can be both male and female, it allows for an interpretation of the body which does not rely on biological determinism, masculine discourse or essentialist feminism but, instead, provides the site for a new understanding of the body and constructions of gendered identities. Theoretical partialism finds its origins in psychoanalysis, sexology and feminist discourse and suggests that the hand can be used as a starting point for a wider theoretical discussion of totality. The paradox of the hand's power of unification and differentiation is explored and the fetishistic approach reveals that there is not necessarily *one* totality but the potential of understanding different interpretations of the total. Therefore, theoretical partialism is used not as a method of regaining conventional ideas of totality but rather as a means for gaining a reconstituted notion of the whole and of selfhood from the fragments of modernity.

My thesis develops this approach through readings of six texts: predominantly Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*; Arthur Munby's material is also investigated in order to establish the hand's significance in the Victorian imagination; and as a method of illustrating the extent to which the hand features as a signifier in modernism, I explore the fragmented form and gendered identities in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Katherine Mansfield's "The Little Governess" and Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*.

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INTRODUCTION

It was not perhaps a ‘good’ self, but it was herself, her own familiar secretly happy and rejoicing self – not dead. Her hands lying on the coverlet knew it. They were again at these moments her own old hands, holding very firmly to things that no one might touch or even approach too nearly, things, everything, the great thing that would some day communicate itself to someone through these secret hands with strangely thrilling finger-tips.¹

As *Pilgrimage*’s protagonist, Miriam Henderson, ponders her hands so too does this thesis consider the ‘secret’ of those ‘hands with strangely thrilling finger-tips’. What my thesis proposes is a new critical approach – theoretical partialism – whereby looking at the particular and reading the depiction of the hand offers further insight into various aspects of the subject, such as, their societal positioning, their working life, their perception in society, gendered subjectivity and constructions of their identity. Indeed, Miriam’s uncertain gendered identity is a problem with which she struggles throughout the entirety of the novel cycle and, as a result, depictions of the whole body are seemingly absent from the text. However, what is offered are separate fragments of the textual body – a wrist, a forearm, her hair, a face – but, most notably, is the representation of the hand as it comes to signify multiple elements including female subjectivity, sexuality and identity.

My thesis suggests a dismembering of the body: to slice the theoretical view and look at one area, one body part – the hand – as a means of understanding the whole. To clarify, this approach is not a kind of removal or replacement such as prosthesis theory which details the relationship between the subject and the added object. For example, Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra’s, ‘Prosthetic Aesthetic’ special issue of *New*

¹ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), pp. 282-3. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *I*. As Richardson’s use of punctuation fluctuates (for example, length of ellipses and placement of spaces vary frequently), throughout this thesis the quotations used from *Pilgrimage* will be transcribed verbatim from the original.

Formations offers an interesting compendium of prosthesis theory.² This collected edition includes a comprehensive selection of essays which all apply prosthesis theory to a variety of different disciplines, such as literature, film, television, art and beyond. Equally, an excellent analysis and application of prosthesis theory is Tim Armstrong's chapter "Prosthetic Modernism" in *Modernism, Technology and the Body*. Here Armstrong sets out two interpretations of prosthesis: negative and positive. The former deals with replacing a 'lack': 'It supplies deficiencies and makes up for absences, correcting defects in sight, replacing a lost loved one; the house replaces the original loss, the womb. Lost body parts and objects – as in Freud's thinking generally – are compensated for'.³ In contrast, the positive interpretation 'involves a more utopian version of technology, in which human capacities are extrapolated'.⁴ But in both interpretations they are 'bound up with the dynamics of modernity' because 'technology offers a re-formed body'.⁵ Whilst a recent critical theory relating to the modernist body, my approach of theoretical partialism deviates here as it does not offer a 're-formed body' so much as a re-formed *view* of the *original* body. The focus on the hand is not to 'make up for absences' or replace a 'lack' with technology but to gain a new perspective of the self and of the whole.

I suggest that because the hand is an innate part of the body and can be both male and female, a reading of the hand allows for an interpretation of the body which does not rely on biological determinism, masculine discourse or essentialist feminism. Instead, it provides the site for a new understanding of the body and constructions of gendered identities. My approach will break away from some of the standard feminist approaches –

² Marquard Smith & Joanne Morra, 'The "Prosthetic Aesthetic"', special issue, *New Formations*, Vol. 46 (2002).

³ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 77.

⁴ Ibid, p. 78.

⁵ Idem.

it will not deny the body, it will not take the body as the essence of the female, it will not deal with the maternal body or look at embodiment as a whole – it will look solely at the hand in order to revisit and revise understandings of the whole. As Joanne Winning argues in “Lesbian Sexuality in the Story of Modernism”, the analysis of sexual identity ‘requires working across different discursive and disciplinary boundaries’,⁶ so too does the analysis of selfhood and gendered identities. Thus theoretical partialism draws from different disciplines such as sexology, psychoanalysis, feminist discourses, body studies, literary criticism as well as sociocultural studies. Therefore, in this Introduction I will lay out the theoretical unpinning of my theory and the different discourses that inform my readings. First, I will discuss the relatively overlooked subsection of fetishism – partialism – as a means of illustrating how I appropriate this sexological classification as a new approach to textual bodies. Then I turn to the significance of the hand in *Pilgrimage* so as to highlight its relevance in this key modernist text. Next I consider the fragmentation which can be seen as endemic to modernism, and demonstrate how this fragmentation lends itself to a partialist approach. Finally, I will explore the previous terrain of feminist discourse and highlight what areas have been influential to my analysis.

Partialism & dismembering the textual body

In relation to literary studies, dismembering is, indeed, very much what a modernist text does to the body. In James Joyce’s *Ulysses* for example, the text is strongly orientated towards the body. Thus, for example, each section is divided up to represent a different body part. The Gilbert and Linati Schemata differ slightly on their categorisation but list the organs as such: Telemachus/Nestor/Proteus: does not yet suffer the body; Calypso:

⁶ Joanne Winning, ‘Lesbian Sexuality in the Story of Modernism’ in Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gasiorek, Deborah Longworth & Andrew Thacker, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 218.

Kidneys; Lotus Eaters: Genitals/Skin; Hades: Heart; Aeolus: Lungs; Lestrygonians: Esophagus; Scylla and Charybdis: Brain; Wandering Rocks: Blood; Sirens: Ear; Cyclops: Muscles/bones; Nausicaa: Eye, Nose; Oxen of the Sun: Womb/Matrix, Uterus; Circe: Locomotive apparatus/skeleton; Eumaeus: Nerves; Ithaca: Skeleton/juices; Penelope: Flesh/fat.⁷ So while the body is represented as a whole throughout the novel, each section is related to a particular part. In this way looking at the individual parts and their associations help to establish a new view of the whole body in the same way that theoretical partialism does.

The hand therefore can be used as a starting point for a wider theoretical discussion. Socially, it indicates class and position. Historically, the physical appearance of the hand could easily tell the observer the class and societal position of its owner: while a lady would have possessed a milky white soft hand, never seen outdoors without gloves, a servant's hands would illustrate their hard work through their rough and coarse appearance. The social class of men as well as women is revealed by their hands. For example, Virginia Woolf's Orlando is sickened at the sight of the carpenter's work-worn hand:

She saw with disgusting vividness that the thumb on Joe's right hand was without a finger nail and there was a raised saucer of pink flesh where the nail should have been. The sight was so repulsive that she felt faint for a moment.⁸

Here Woolf implies a simple binary: the upper-class hand is refined, the lower-class is repugnant; but in the texts present in this thesis, the hand is often more complex and can be seen to signify not just the owner's character, but the social setting, the gendered identities and the power dynamics in play.

⁷ James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 734-739.

⁸ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 223.

The hand in particular is a distinctly human characteristic and reading literary representations of the hand can offer a new interpretation of the body. But here a paradox arises: how can one look at a part to understand the whole and how will this not automatically realign the whole to the previous conventional understanding of the body? Although the physical hand is a relatively small part of the body it has a universal cultural significance: it connects all of us, links us as a commonality regardless of gender, race, sexuality or creed but paradoxically it also holds an equal ability to divide us, to differentiate between us. The very appearance of one's hand is enough to separate one – whether in those previously uniting terms of class, gender or race – from another. So the innate binary of the hand establishes a definitive focal point where several differing factors merge and, naturally, with it comes contention, attraction, repulsion, but rarely indifference. It is this paradox of unifying and division which invests it with power as a signifier. Therefore, in its metonymic approach, theoretical partialism offers the potential for a new understanding and a restructuring of totality.

My approach of theoretical partialism finds its origins in psychology and sexology. Partialism was originally discussed as a relatively small subcategory of fetishism by psychologists such as Alfred Binet and Freud as well as, Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld.⁹ In psychoanalytical terms, for Freud the fetish is as a result of the man's process of dealing with the mother's castration where the loss of the phallus is redirected to another object:

During the conflict between the deadweight of the unwelcome perception and the force of the opposite wish, a compromise is constructed such as is only possible in the realm of unconscious modes of thought – by the primary processes. In the world of psychical reality the woman still has a penis in spite of all, but this penis is no longer the same as it once was. Something else has taken its place, has been

⁹ Fetishism had previously been used in a religious context until 1887 when Alfred Binet termed it in relation to sexual perversions. See Alfred Binet, 'Le fétichisme dans l' amour', *Revue Philosophique*, Vol. 24 (1887).

appointed its successor, so to speak, and now absorbs all the interest which formerly belonged to the penis. But this interest undergoes yet another very strong reinforcement, because the horror of castration sets up a substitute. Aversion from the real female genitals, which is never lacking in any fetishist, also remains as an indelible stigma of the repression that has taken place. One can now see what the fetish achieves and how it is enabled to persist. It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it; it also saves the fetishist from being a homosexual by endowing women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects.¹⁰

For the modernist body the ‘threat of castration’ or ‘traumatic amnesia’ is caused by fragmentation,¹¹ and thus the view is redirected to the part; in theoretical partialism a compromise is constructed whereby the hand is appointed the successor of the whole.

Freud also claims that: ‘The significance of fetishes is not known to the world at large and therefore not prohibited; they are easily obtainable and sexual gratification by their means is thus very convenient. The fetishist has no trouble in getting what other men have to woo and exert themselves to obtain’.¹² Likewise for literary studies, theoretical partialism is not limited and can offer a convenient means for obtaining an understanding of the modernist body and identity. Similarly, Krafft-Ebing claims that for the fetishist, ‘instead of coitus, strange manipulations of the fetich become the object of the desire’,¹³ in this way, theoretical partialism exchanges the view of the body in its totality for ‘the strange manipulation’ of the hand as its object of desire and in so doing achieves a different understanding of the whole.

As Freud adds to his analysis of fetishism, I too wish to add to my proposition of theoretical partialism: Freud observes a ‘double attitude’, that it is not the case that the ‘fetishist scotomizes the castration of women’ but that the part of them ‘consistent with

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, ‘Fetishism’ in *Collected Papers*, Vol.V (London: Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1950), p. 200.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 201.

¹² Ibid, pp. 200-1.

¹³ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Phychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1998), p. 147.

reality stood alongside the one which accorded with a wish'.¹⁴ Here Freud refers to Laforque's term, scotomization, which is defined as 'the avoidance or denial of an undesirable reality through the creation of a mental blind spot',¹⁵ and argues that this denial is not necessarily the case with fetishists – they are aware of reality but also wish to cater for their fetishistic desire. Correspondingly, theoretical partialism does not create a 'blind spot'. It is aware of the reality of totality but in its fetishistic approach it reveals that there is not necessarily *one* totality, it accords to the wish for the potential of understanding different interpretations of the total.

In its history, partialism moved from its original position as a subcategory of fetishism and later became recognised as a separate category which was supported by Gebhard *et al* in *Sex Offenders: An Analysis of Types*.¹⁶ *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* lists partialism as a 'Paraphilia Not Otherwise Specified (NOS)' which is the sexual urge with the 'exclusive focus on part of the body' experienced for a duration of six months or more.¹⁷ More recently, it has been suggested that partialism should return as a sub-type of fetishism since the criterion for paraphilic diagnosis does not show enough evidence to warrant the separation.¹⁸ But either as a sub-type of fetishism or as a separate entity, partialism can be a useful framework for my theory; it is the exclusive theoretical focus on one part of the body (in this case, the hand) as a method for revealing a greater, and hence a more satisfying, understanding of the body and the associated social perceptions. Fetishism is a comparatively small subsection of sexology and psychoanalysis and partialism even more so, therefore its adaptation to other processes is a rather

¹⁴ Freud, p. 202.

¹⁵ OED.

¹⁶ See Paul H. Gebhard et al, *Sex Offenders: An Analysis of Types* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

¹⁷ *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR, 2000), p. 274.

¹⁸ See Martin P. Kafka, 'The DSM Diagnostic Criteria for Paraphilia Not Otherwise Specified', *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2010).

unexplored area. My aim is to adopt this particular concept of an ‘exclusive focus on part of the body’: to mine its previously untapped resources and to transfer it to literary studies and the study of the body.

Miriam’s Left (and Right) Hand

Returning to the first quotation, in *Backwater*, the second novel-chapter of *Pilgrimage*, Dorothy Richardson’s heroine, Miriam, lies in bed and contemplates her hands:

Holding them up in the gaslight she dreamed over their wisdom. They knew everything and held their secret, even from her. She eyed them, communed with them, passionately trusted them. They were not ‘artistic’ or ‘clever’ hands. The fingers did not “taper” nor did the outstretched thumb curl back on itself like a frond – like Nan Babington’s. They were long, the tips squarish and firmly padded, the palm square and bony and supple, and the large thumb-joint of a man. The right hand was larger than the left, kindlier, friendlier, wiser. The expression of the left hand was less reassuring. It was a narrower, lighter hand, more flexible, less sensitive and more even in its touch – more smooth and manageable in playing scales. It seemed to belong to her much less than the right; but when the two were firmly interlocked they made a pleasant curious whole, the right clasping more firmly over the back of the left palm, the left hand clinging, its fingers close together against the hard knuckles of the right.

It was only when she was alone and in the intervals of quiet reading that she came into possession of her hands. With others they oppressed her by their size and their lack of feminine expressiveness. No one could fall in love with such hands. Loving her, someone might come to tolerate them. They were utterly unlike Eve’s plump, white, inflexible little palms. But they were her strength. They came between her and the world of women. They would be her companions until the end. They would wither. But the bones would not change. The bones would be laid, unchanged and wise, in her grave (*I*, p. 283).

It is this passage which articulates the significance of the hand and offers a pertinent example of the ubiquity of the fragmented body in modernist literature and is, indeed, the passage from which this thesis has originated.

Richardson’s thirteen-novel cycle, *Pilgrimage*, is an important piece of modernist work which develops new forms of writing (stream of consciousness, for example), new narrative possibilities and a new mode for discussing female consciousness. Furthermore,

it is an important example of the fragmentation which is seen more generally in modernist art and literature. Applying a theoretical partialist approach can help to illuminate the textual bodies represented in this text. Looking at the fragmented body, in *Pointed Roofs* alone there are in excess of one hundred references to hands. Indeed, hands become the medium through which Miriam relates to herself and to others but it is this illustrative passage, quoted above, which lays out the fundamental importance of the hand. Almost as a list, it details how the hand can be understood as a multifarious signifier of: the 'self'; ownership; protection; power; sexuality; wisdom; knowledge; appearance; gender; feminine identity; masculine qualities; expressive attributes; aesthetics; possession; social awkwardness; strength; connection; separation; attraction; repulsion; permanence and love. In short, it is this idea of the hand as a multiple signifier which will be the focus of this thesis.

Mandy Merck discusses the above passage from *Pilgrimage* in her chapter "The Lesbian Hand" in *In Your Face*,¹⁹ and reads the representation of the hand as a signifier of lesbian desire: 'The lesbian hand has a cultural history in which it figures both as an instrument of sexual contact and as a marker of gender transitivity'.²⁰ In relation to the sexual hand, Merck argues that the 'reluctant acknowledgment of the hand's erotic function by lesbian sexology is duplicated in lesbian criticism'.²¹ Similarly, I want to suggest that the wider role of the hand is underexplored in literary criticism and merits further investigation as it can offer the potential for a new interpretation of the modernist body. The depiction of Miriam's masculine hands and their 'autoerotic embrace' lead Merck to argue that: 'The gendering of the hands in this description, while suggesting

¹⁹ See Mandy Merck, 'The Lesbian Hand' in *In Your Face: 9 Sexual Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 124-147.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 127.

²¹ Ibid, p. 129.

something of Miriam's almost hermaphroditic self-sufficiency, also evokes sexual possibilities, possibilities that are further multiplied by our individual endowment with two such instruments'.²² While the instrumental nature of hands certainly invests them with further significance, I would argue that their significance extends to more than just sexual possibilities. Merck argues that the majority of readings of the lesbian hand are read in light of masculine discourse whereby they become the threatening phallus by proxy: 'the lesbian hand might present the male spectator with the daunting prospect of erotic rivalry or phallic obsolescence', and posits an interpretation where manual eroticism is not phallus-dependent. As is the case for Merck's theory of the lesbian hand, I wish to read the wider role of the hand in a manner that can also elude the 'language of the dominant'.²³

Discussing the same passage from *Pilgrimage*, in "Mother-Love: Psychoanalysis and the Lesbian Life Story", Joanne Winning also makes the argument that 'Miriam experiences a problematic relationship with her female body in the context of the destabilizing definitions of femininity imposed on it by external discourses'.²⁴ Therefore, reading the female body purely through the lens of dominant sexology and psychoanalysis problematises a complete understanding, complicates the writing of femininity and asks for a more neutral reinterpretation. Through my theoretical partialist approach, what I will suggest is that Richardson forges a new language in which to write about female subjectivity and the female body which is distinct from either a masculine dominant or an essentialist feminist discourse. Winning highlights the 'lack' of a total view of Miriam's body and also draws on this passage and the idea of a fragmented body as seen specifically in the hands: 'The only parts of her body that resurface from beneath the overdetermining

²² Idem.

²³ Ibid, p. 134.

²⁴ Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p. 78.

discourses, confirming her “lack” of femininity and conveying her “difference,” are her hands’.²⁵ Relating to the manual imagery in the passage from *Backwater*, like Merck, Winning argues that the ‘secret’ held in Miriam’s hands signifies lesbian desire: ‘The hand as a symbol of sexual desire must surely represent a primary signifier in a yet untheorized system of lesbian erotics’.²⁶ Placing Miriam in the Oedipal triangle as ‘her mother’s son’ between the ‘destructive Mr. Henderson’ and ‘the suicidal Mrs. Henderson’, Winning argues that the masculine attributes placed on Miriam’s body in the text are in ‘keeping with the sexological theorization of the body of the invert, which maps features of masculinity onto the body of the lesbian’.²⁷ Thus, Miriam’s masculine hands signify not only secret lesbian sexuality but are also the focal point of her uncomfortable relationship with her femininity. Importantly, from Winning’s study comes the notion of the ‘third’ gender. Alongside a position which sexology determines as ‘neither male nor female’, Winning reads the ‘third’ through the Oedipal frame in relation to Miriam’s relationship with her mother.²⁸ Merck also discusses this third position in her reading of the film *Bound*,²⁹ where the relationships both heterosexual and homosexual that the female lead, Violet, has, work to achieve ‘the final triangulation, which counterposes both butch and femme to the naturalized third term, female’.³⁰ However one defines this ‘third’ status, what it does do in *Pilgrimage* is signify Miriam’s ‘difference’, her ambiguous gendered identity and her uncomfortable relationship with conventional notions of femininity, and this is an idea to which my thesis will repeatedly return. Encouraged by Merck’s and Winning’s readings of the lesbian hand, what I am suggesting is that the hand can also be seen as a wider signifier and taking a theoretical partialist approach will help to illuminate

²⁵ Idem.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 79.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 78-9.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 81.

²⁹ See *Bound*. Motion Picture. Directed by Andy Wachowski & Lana Wachowski. Dino De Laurentiis Company (1996).

³⁰ Merck, p. 126.

this. But first, before applying this theoretical position to literary texts, it is useful to consider the theoretical positions which have informed my reading.

Fragmentation

Of modernity, David Frisby claims: 'The world as a coherent totality has been shattered. Only its individual fragments remain'.³¹ So if, as Frisby argues, fragmentation is the norm in modernity what does this mean for the modernist body? Therefore, the fragmentation of the modernist body links to the fetishistic frame where the attention to the whole is redirected to the fragmented part. The sense of fragmentation is particularly evident in modernism, not just in modernist literature but also in many other modernist forms from art to politics.³² Cubism, for example, where visual representations of fragmented bodies and space proliferate and, likewise, Futurism, Dada and Vorticism follow this trend in their artistic and sociocultural movements which express dynamic fragmentation.³³

³¹ David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986), p. 115.

³² Indeed, it is rare to find a 'reader' or 'critical companion' to modernist studies that does not in some way deal with aspects of fragmentation in modernism. See James Longenback, 'Modern poetry' and Marianne Dekoven, 'Modernism and gender' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Maren Tova Linett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Anne Fogarty, 'Yeats, Ireland and Modernism' in Alex Davis & Lee Margaret Jenkins, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); 'H.D., Ezra Pound and Imagism' and 'James Joyce: *Ulysses* and Love' in David Ayers, *Modernism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); 'T.S. Eliot' in Lawrence Rainey, ed., *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); 'Modernism, Modernity and Time' in Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: a Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Stephen Ross, ed., *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009); 'Introduction' in Sally Ledger & Scott McCracken, eds., *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) are just a selection of critical editions which all detail the modernist theme of fragmentation.

³³ Wyndham Lewis' art work *Before Antwerp* featured on the title page of the 15th July 1915 edition of *BLAST* is a pertinent example of the visually fragmented style of the movement. Also, see George Dillan, 'Dada Photomontage and net.art Sitemaps', *Postmodern Culture*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2000) who discusses the visual representation of Dada material and how fragments of text and pictures are juxtaposed as a means of turning mass culture upon itself.

David Frisby's innovative study, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin*, discusses literary examples of fragmentation and details the contemporary views put forward by Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin.³⁴ Using Marxist theory, Frisby explores capitalist society and argues that 'the "phantasmagoria" of the world of commodities is precisely a world in motion, in flux'.³⁵ The 'phantasmagoria' of consumerism and commodities which renders the world in a state of continual change – the new replacing the old – is an idea which can be seen throughout the texts used in this thesis, especially in the work of Eliot and Rhys where characters become commodities in a continual battle to stay "new". John Steven Childs also considers fragmentation and focuses his study on the narrative form of Pound's *Cantos*.³⁶ Childs argues that fragmented form caters for a discourse that is based on chaos and argues that Pound is one of the forefathers of this literary aesthetic. A more recent study is Sara Haslam's *Fragmenting Modernism: Ford Madox Ford, the Novel and the Great War*, which considers Ford Madox Ford in relation to fragmentation and proposes that he is as central to the modernist movement as Pound, Eliot or Joyce.³⁷ Like those before her, she argues that the fragmentation present in modernist literature is a result of the 'chaos' found in modernity and is a narrative mode used to negotiate the resulting 'crisis' of a new literary movement which is breaking from previous nineteenth-century practices, leading her to the view that 'fragmentation [is] endemic to modernism'.³⁸

³⁴ See Frisby.

³⁵ Frisby, pp. 22-3.

³⁶ See John Steven Childs, *Modernist Form: Pound's Style in the Early Cantos* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1986) and particularly the chapter 'Deletion and Fragmentation'. Frederic Jameson's influential study is also worth noting here as it theorises the framework of the literature of Balzac, Gissing and Conrad and considers the fragmented form found in each (Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 1981).

³⁷ Sara Haslam, *Fragmenting Modernism: Ford Madox Ford, the Novel and the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2; p. 8.

Peter Childs explores the ‘Janus-faced perspectives’ of the prominent figures in pre-War modernism as they strive to leave the old and forge the new.³⁹ But, he argues that this changes for those amidst the chaos of post-War society:

The Modernists who followed after the First World War were more noticeable for their pessimism and their sense of a failed, fragmented society, in which the uncomprehending individual was swallowed up by huge forces outside of personal control, leaving many writers with the sense that they should withdraw into their art and an intense, aesthetic world where sense, shape and order could be achieved.⁴⁰

While their sense of a ‘failed’ and ‘fragmented’ society is overwhelmingly clear, Childs offers, perhaps, an over-positive interpretation of the ‘sense, shape and order’ achieved in modernist writing. I would argue that modernist writing provides a space in which writers use the rhetoric of fragmentation, fragmented forms and experiments in order to explore, negotiate and respond to a fragmented society. Susan Friedman also argues for the centrality of fragmentation to modernism: ‘The starting point of modernism is the crisis of belief that pervades twentieth-century western culture: loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration, and shattering of cultural symbols and norms’.⁴¹ But, in common with Childs, she goes on to argue that modernist writers refuse to be ‘satisfied with the seeming meaninglessness, chaos, and fragmentation of material reality’ and to counteract this ‘chaos’, ‘the search for order and pattern began in its own negation, in the overwhelming sense of disorder and fragmentation caused by the modern materialist world. The artist as seer would attempt to create what the culture could no longer produce’.⁴² Friedman offers a convincing perspective: the modernist quest is the ‘search itself rather than any given answer’,⁴³ and so the movement between and around these fragments is the very quest itself. It is this movement amongst the fragments that this thesis will explore. Rather than trying to find a concrete ‘answer’, my intention is to investigate

³⁹ Peter Childs, *Modernism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), p. 38.

⁴⁰ *Idem.*

⁴¹ Susan Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 97.

⁴² *Idem.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

the fragments and how they are presented in modernist literature so as to gain an understanding of the ‘meaningless, chaos and fragmentation’ of modernist bodies and identities.

In relation to the hand, my thesis seeks to revisit and revise the question of “high” modernism by looking at what can be termed “low” modernism – low, not only in terms of non-elitist, working class but also in terms of what is deemed to be crass and vulgar. While Haslam claims that some late twentieth-century critics are guilty ‘of imposing a pattern instead of deducing one’,⁴⁴ I disagree with seeing fragmentation in modernism as an imposed ‘pattern’, and, as will become apparent in the course of this thesis, would argue that this is not an analysis that literary criticism has retrospectively placed on modernism. This ‘pattern’ is seen in the contemporary works, both literary and critical, of countless authors, such as: Barnes, Benjamin, Eliot, Gissing, Ford, Joyce, Pound, Rhys, Richardson and Woolf – to name but a few. This will become evident in the texts explored throughout Part II of the thesis, where I conduct a survey of a cross section of modernist writers – Katherine Mansfield, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and Jean Rhys – as a means of contextualising theories of fragmentation and establishing how theoretical partialism can offer a new perspective. It is apparent that fragmentation crosses (or breaks) all of modernism’s boundaries and my approach further fragments modernist studies. With the particular focus on the representation of the hand, I seek to examine issues of gender, class and power as read in the textual body.

⁴⁴ Haslam, p. 3.

Feminist theory

Feminist theories have always been concerned with the body, whether it be in order to counteract the over-defined relationship between women and their bodies by aligning more with the intellectual qualities associated with masculinity or to embrace the body as ‘the very essence of the female’.⁴⁵ Theories which have been more concerned with the corporeal body are often related to the reproductive organs and the maternal body or the genitals and female sexual desire whereas other specific body parts tend to be neglected. Men are sometimes linked with specific parts but again this is often genitalia. Obvious examples are theories such as masculine creative “cream”,⁴⁶ and the Freudian theory of penis envy. Furthermore, fetishism is almost solely linked with men by, again, Freudian approaches as well as the work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Wilhelm Stekel, Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds.⁴⁷ Where then does the female stand in this respect? As Elizabeth V. Spelman bluntly states, women have received very little acknowledgement from the great philosophers: ‘What philosophers have had to say about women typically has been nasty, brutish, and short’.⁴⁸ This dominant masculinist ideology has set a precedent which has continued to associate men with a higher intellectual and a corporeally free status and women with bodies which are uncontrollable, dirty and contaminating. The negative connotations of the female body are articulated through masculine notions of the culturally/socially perceived body which are further supported by facts of biological difference. The perceived ‘leaking’ female body only further categorises

⁴⁵ Janet Price & Magrit Shildrick, *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 1.

⁴⁶ See Wayne Koestenbaum, ‘The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot’s and Ezra Pound’s Collaboration on Hysteria’, *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1988).

⁴⁷ See Sigmund Freud, ‘Fetishism’ in *Collected Papers Volume V* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950); Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Phychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1998); Wilhelm Stekel, *Sexual Aberrations: The Phenomena of Fetishism in Relation to Sex*, Vol.II (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1930); Havelock Ellis & John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1920).

⁴⁸ Elizabeth V. Spelman, ‘Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views’, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1982), p. 109.

it, in masculine ideology, as uncontrollable and contaminating and this somatophobia is used as a justification for female disempowerment.⁴⁹ Mary Douglas' seminal work *Purity and Danger* identifies this very problem and explores the sociological impact of women's perceived uncleanness.⁵⁰ Influential in many subsequent feminist debates, Douglas argues that the material body in society is read in terms of its gender; this socially constructed gendered positioning means that 'the symbolism of the imperfect vessel appropriately weighs more heavily on the women than on the men'.⁵¹

Second wave feminism saw a reclamation of the female body. No longer feeling the necessity of suppressing it, theorists were able to celebrate the female body and sought to make a distinction between sex and gender. For essentialist feminists, the maternal body and female domesticity were honoured as being positive facets of femininity. Annie Leclerc's *Parole de femme* offers a pertinent example of this essentialist view on female oppression arguing that it is women's attitudes to their bodies which must change in order to regain some social equilibrium.⁵² Leclerc claims that: 'female thought can exist, must exist so as to put an end at last, not to male thought itself, but to its ridiculous – or tragic – soliloquy'.⁵³ Christine Delphy's essay "Protofeminism and Antifeminism" offers an example of the discord this essentialist viewpoint creates within feminism.⁵⁴ From a radical feminist position, Delphy criticises Leclerc for writing not for women but with an audience of men in mind. Arguing that Leclerc was 'applauded by men', Delphy states that this was because Leclerc's writing 'will not advance the liberation of women one jot. On the

⁴⁹ I discuss this perceived contaminatory effect of women in 'Feminine Fluidity: Mind versus Body in *Pilgrimage*', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 2 (2009).

⁵⁰ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002).

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 156.

⁵² See Annie Leclerc, *Parole de femme* (Paris: Grasset, 1974).

⁵³ Ibid, p. 79.

⁵⁴ See Christine Delphy, 'Protofeminism and Antifeminism' in Toril Moi, *French Feminist Thought: A Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).

contrary, it will ease the present system'.⁵⁵ Leclerc argues for what is often regarded as masculine ideology – biological fate – and claims that women should regard giving birth and motherhood as an affirmation of their femininity. Promoting women's procreative ability as the reason for their equality (or indeed supremacy) to men, she argues that women are man's 'most threatening enemy precisely because she is the most gifted for life'.⁵⁶ Leclerc's argument is marred by the socially constructed gendered binary to which it adheres. Delphy counters this and claims that: 'It is essential to recognize that the meaning of periods for instance, is not *given* with and by the flow of blood, but, like all *meaning*, by consciousness, and thus by society',⁵⁷ and so it is imperative to acknowledge that representations of the biological are often social (and often male) constructions. Leclerc's idea of sexual difference, although spun in a positive manner, surely echoes that which has been used in the disempowerment of women and that which Douglas discussed; it does not move towards any egalitarian ideal, and is, in fact, perilously close to reaffirming negative concepts of sexual difference. Women's 'uncontrollable' bodies are either condemned and feared by masculine ideology or honoured as possessing a Gaian power by essentialist feminists; but both stances still rest on one idea – 'In short, women just are their bodies in a way that men are not'.⁵⁸

We should be sceptical of such a binary. Moira Gatens rightly questions how the body of a woman in the role of wife/mother/domestic worker can have much in common with an Olympic athlete.⁵⁹ Why are all women viewed the same just because they are women? But then this is not really about biology, it is about social hierarchy and power.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 80.

⁵⁶ Leclerc, p. 73.

⁵⁷ Delphy, p. 92.

⁵⁸ Price & Shildrick, p. 3.

⁵⁹ See Moira Gatens, 'Power, Bodies and Difference' in Michèle Barratt & Ann Phillips, eds., *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (California: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 122.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a variety of new feminist approaches under the auspices of poststructuralism, postmodernism and French feminism. These problematised earlier theories and sought to revalue concepts of the body, theories of embodiment, corporeality and acknowledge the potential that reinterpretations could offer. Such ideas can be seen in the innovative work of, for example, Julia Kristeva (1982), Luce Irigaray (1985), Toril Moi (1985), Chris Weedon (1987), Judith Butler (1990; 1993), Donna Haraway (1991) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994).⁶⁰ They all, albeit in different ways, address and critique the distinction between sex as a biological term and gender as culturally and socially constructed and seek to develop a language for discussing the body which moves on from the earlier dominant masculine discourse.⁶¹ My thesis aims to locate itself as distinct from these binaries of essentialist feminism or masculine discourse and draw upon this “new language” to discuss textual bodies.

Luce Irigaray’s innovative work, *The Sex Which Is Not One* addresses the masculine parameters placed on female subjectivity and the binaries created. Importantly it looks at the bodily implications masculine discourse places on women, and revisits the notion of Woman, confronting phallogocentrism as a paradigm which denies the female body and female erotic desire:

The exclusion of a female imaginary certainly puts woman in the position of experiencing herself only fragmentarily, in the little-structured margins of a dominant ideology, as waste, or excess, what is left of a mirror invested by the (masculine) ‘subject’ to reflect himself, to copy himself. Moreover, the role of ‘femininity’ is prescribed by this masculine specula(riza)tion and corresponds

⁶⁰ See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) which is underpinned by Lacanian theory and explores, or, reconsiders, the abject in the lived experience and how it can subvert boundaries; Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London: Methuen, 1985); Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991); Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (London: Routledge, 1994). Interestingly, most draw on the work of Mary Douglas.

⁶¹ See Moi, p. 3.

scarcely at all to woman's desire, which may be recovered only in secret, in hiding, with anxiety and guilt.⁶²

This side-lining or shaming of the female body draws on Mary Douglas' work and is seen later in Butler's and Grosz's theories.⁶³ It also recalls the idea of fragmentation which, for Irigaray, is particularly dominant in the lived experience of women. Although not a specific term I use, Irigaray's concept of phallogocentrism is recurrent throughout my thesis. The idea of masculine discourse and the boundaries it places on women is seen throughout *Pilgrimage* and is often a source of annoyance for Miriam. But this masculine rhetoric is important when trying to articulate the female body and is a problem which is encountered, again and again, in *Pilgrimage*.

Donna Haraway also attempts to forge a new feminist language which allows for the representation of women away from the constraints of masculine rhetoric. She theorises the difference between sex and gender and the political implications of the words as well as the multiple discourses – 'psychology, psychoanalysis, medicine, biology, and sociology'⁶⁴ – one must pass through before gaining an understanding of the construction of gender identity. In light of the various academic and feminist discourses on the sex/gender binary, Haraway claims that 'the identity of "woman" is both claimed and deconstructed simultaneously. Struggle over agents, memories, and terms of these reconstitutions is at the heart of feminist sex/gender politics'.⁶⁵ This leads her to propose her 'Cyborg Manifesto' – 'an ironic dream of a common language for women in the

⁶² Irigaray, p. 30.

⁶³ In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler continues and expands on her theories of female materiality. Drawing on Butler's theories as well as Douglas' and Grosz's arguments, I have discussed in an article that rather than being a contaminatory factor as seen in masculine ideology, female fluidity can be harnessed as active power: 'the penetrative capability of the fluid female assumes masculine agency and threatens the hegemonic position. The male denunciation of female fluidity therefore can be seen as a defensive measure, as the concept of the "uncontrollable" and "seeping" fluidity not only acts as a fluid which "engulfs all" but also a feminine fluid which is able to *permeate* all' (Yates, p. 63).

⁶⁴ Haraway, p. 132.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp. 147-8.

integrated circuit’.⁶⁶ This ‘integrated circuit’ is made up of locations found in the capitalist society: home, market, paid work place, state, school, clinic-hospital and church and the task of the manifesto is to read the ‘webs of power’ which are mediated and enforced in scientific and technological spheres.⁶⁷ Ultimately, the cyborg manifesto draws two conclusive arguments – 1: ‘the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality’ and 2: ‘taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an anti-science metaphysics’ and instead suggests ‘embracing the skilful task of reconstructing boundaries of daily life’.⁶⁸ Synthesising a futuristic approach with Marxist and feminist debates, Haraway foregrounds the importance of viewing Woman – bodily, politically, socially – in new terms which move past the traditional dualisms and boundaries of patriarchy. As she argues: ‘Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves’.⁶⁹ Developing Haraway’s idea, my thesis aims to move past the traditional dualisms, not in the attempt to produce a ‘universal, totalizing theory’ but to revisit and revise those very notions of universalism.

Yet one cannot consider concepts of Woman and femininity without acknowledging Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal work *The Second Sex*.⁷⁰ De Beauvoir challenges the masculine rhetoric which has ascribed the position of ‘Other’ to women and discusses what constitutes the construction of feminine, femininity and, importantly, Woman. Toril Moi’s *What Is A Woman?* draws heavily on de Beauvoir’s work. She argues that if ‘Lacan returned to Freud; it is time for feminist theorists to return to Beauvoir’ and promotes de Beauvoir as offering ‘exactly the kind of non-essentialist, concrete, historical

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 149.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 170.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 180.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 181.

⁷⁰ See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Books, 1997).

and social understanding of the body that so many contemporary feminists are looking for'.⁷¹ Moi questions the relevance of the distinction between sex and gender and suggests that it is not always constructive for feminist theory; rather she seeks to find a language which does not rely on this distinction to produce 'a good theory of subjectivity'.⁷² In the same way, the application of theoretical partialism to modernist texts also seeks to find a language in which to produce 'a good theory of subjectivity' which is not based on Otherness or previous notions of feminine or femininity.

My thesis also builds upon Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. If, as de Beauvoir claims, 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman',⁷³ then Butler's interpretation of this argument that 'woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a construction that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end' is particularly pertinent to Richardson's theory of being versus becoming.⁷⁴ Richardson, then, was a theorist of gendered subjectivity *avant la lettre*. Predating both de Beauvoir and Butler, she lays the foundations for a theorisation of gendered subjectivity; however, interestingly, Richardson's theory can be seen to counteract the masculine definition of Woman as a process of 'becoming' about which Butler and de Beauvoir write.⁷⁵ For Richardson, becoming is associated with the masculine, it is a process of achievement whereas being, as seen in Miriam, equates to lived experience. Jennifer Cooke convincingly argues that Richardson/Miriam 'is not contrasting these two states, but arguing for their mutual

⁷¹ Moi, p. 5.

⁷² Ibid, p. 6.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 301.

⁷⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 33.

⁷⁵ Richardson articulates this theory in *Clear Horizon*: 'Being versus becoming. Becoming versus being. Look after the being and the becoming will look after itself. Look after the becoming and the being will look after itself? Not so certain. Therefore it is certain that becoming depends upon being. Man carries his bourne within himself and is there already, or he would not even know that he exists' (Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage IV* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 362).

recognition and value'.⁷⁶ Although Richardson was not equipped with the contemporary language of theory or historical perspective/hindsight on the subject of Woman, her ideas can be seen to precede, and arguably to advance, the standpoints of Butler and de Beauvoir as she attempts to articulate a concept of lived experience that exists outside masculine terminology.

For gender performativity, Butler uses the example of drag to complicate the concepts of sex/gender:

The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance.⁷⁷

Butler's concept of gender performativity problematises the traditional perspectives of gender and sex as one and the same. This can be applied to Miriam's situation as her anatomy is distinct from both the social performance she *should* act out (that of the feminine woman) and, at times, the performance she *wishes* to act (that of the intellectual male). It is not simply a case of female/male binaries. Performativity and artifice are intricately linked with theoretical partialism, because the appearance and conduct of the hands inform, conceal and highlight the performance being acted out by the person. Just as hands are said to reveal a person's true age so, too, can they reveal the truth behind a person's performance. It is this theory which informs not only my reading of *Pilgrimage* but of all the modernist texts included in this thesis.

⁷⁶ Jennifer Cooke, 'Dorothy Richardson, Queer Theorist', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 4 (2012), p. 20.

⁷⁷ Butler, p. 137.

Alongside Butler, my thesis takes shape from Grosz's *Volatile Bodies* which explores the social and cultural constructions of that 'leaky vessel' – Woman.⁷⁸ Grosz's theories of the social perception of women's bodies, materiality and corporeality are behind my readings of the textual body. Hands can be seen to take hold of active power (as will be seen in Eliot's work) and although this power is usually associated with men, I intend to investigate how this can also be found in the hands and bodies of women.

Now this is where theoretical partialism comes in – a post-post-ism. As I have claimed already, a theory of dismemberment has been used with regard to the male, so by taking this idea as well as utilising influential feminist body theories, I aim to develop the idea of theoretical partialism. Drawing on theories such as those proposed by Butler, Grosz, Haraway and Irigaray, my thesis will apply the approach of theoretical partialism to modernist writing so as to understand better perceptions of the female body, performativity and subjectivity in a language which is not restricted by the boundaries of masculine discourse or essentialist feminism. Naturally there will be differences between men and women but the interpretation is in no sense one-up(wo)manship. In this way, the hand provides a neutral focal point – it is not genitalia, it is not reproductive organs, it is not gender-reliant – enabling me to explore the paradox of its power of unification and differentiation as a method of achieving a new understanding of the whole.



The thesis is divided into three sections, each of which addresses areas relating to the hand in modernism: Part I considers the working hand; Part II conducts a survey of modernist

⁷⁸ See Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (London: Routledge, 1994).

writing and Part III applies the theory in a close analysis of *Pilgrimage*. While I offer an overview here, a more detailed introduction will be provided prior to each part.

Key to *Pilgrimage* is the construction of Miriam's identity and how her role as worker impacts upon this. Part I examines the representation of the hand and aims to offer a new view of the relationship Miriam has to her working roles and the effect it has upon the construction of her feminine subjectivity and her independence. It is necessary to contextualise the economy of fin de siècle London that Miriam joins, by acknowledging the earlier Victorian attitudes to femininity and work. The diaries, letters and photographs of Arthur Munby, a respected Victorian figure, and his lover Hannah Cullwick, a servant, will be examined as a means of illustrating the role of the hand in Victorian imagination. Reading *Pilgrimage* alongside the illustrative material provided by Munby and Cullwick, Part I seeks to illuminate the role of the hand in constructions of the social and gendered identities of working women.

In Part II, Katherine Mansfield's "The Little Governess", T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* provide the material for a comparative survey of different modernist writers as a method of illustrating the extent to which the hand features as a signifier in modernism. Again, theoretical partialism will underpin the readings of each of these texts; assessing the fragmented form and gendered identities, Part II aims to illuminate concerns of gender, class and power in modernist literature.

Finally, Part III applies the previously explored theories to a close reading of *Pilgrimage*. Further fragmenting my approach, this part considers just one fragment of the

text: Miriam's romantic relationships. Part III follows the chronology of *Pilgrimage*, but this is not designed with ordered linearity in mind; it is done so as to trace Miriam's development. But, as any Richardsonian will know, it is not quite that simple. As is seen in the temporal space of *Pilgrimage*, time, references, thoughts and memories are cut, mingled and intersected and I, too, will be adopting the same interconnected form throughout the analysis throughout Part III. The relationships found in *Pilgrimage* all overlap and intertwine whether in the sense of time or emotional connection; while this may sound disjointed, it will become apparent that there is no finite sense of linearity – the past is a lived experience in the present as much as is the future. I begin with Miriam's first foray into the marriage market; drawing on theories of the institution of marriage and the economy of a commodity culture, this section aims to lay the foundations for an understanding of Miriam's gendered and sexual identity. I then move on to three relationships in *Pilgrimage*: those with Michael, Hypo and Amabel. These three are chosen and explored as I believe that they are the key relationships because all are instrumental in Miriam's journey to a greater understanding of her feminine identity.

The purpose of this thesis is to develop theoretical partialism as a new avenue in literary criticism. It has developed out of feminist theories, body studies and sexology, establishing how looking at the particular can offer a more complex view of social concerns and perceptions. This approach is aptly placed in the field of modernist literature as the fragmented form of modernism is conducive to further dismembering. The modernist search for an understanding of identity and subjectivity is also my search; therefore, theoretical partialism is used not as a method of regaining conventional ideas of totality but rather as a means for gaining a reconstituted notion of the whole and of selfhood from the fragments of modernity.

Part I

‘Curious, I say, to reflect that the hands were not as their owners ...That which was clumsy and coarse, and big, was the hand of the maiden!’

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Part I of this thesis seeks to locate the hand as a signifier of the working life of women in order to explore how their status as workers affects their social standing and gendered identity. One of the things that was distinctive about Richardson as a modernist writer was the fact that she herself was a new woman worker in fin-de-siècle London. Consequently, one of the key themes in *Pilgrimage* is Miriam's relationship to work and its construction of her identity. *Pilgrimage* details the lived experience of the woman worker and by exploring the representation of the hand, it is possible to open up a new view of the relationship Miriam has to her working roles and how this status affects her independence and the construction of her femininity. But before turning to the text, it is important to look at the economy of turn of the century London that Miriam enters in the context of Victorian attitudes to work and femininity.

Taking a theoretical partialist approach and focussing on the hand can offer new insight into Victorian attitudes. The materials of Arthur J. Munby, a respected civil servant and barrister, and his lover Hannah Cullwick, a working class servant, will be explored. Although not read as a totalizing account of Victorian attitudes, what Munby's and Cullwick's material offer is an explicit and detailed insight into the specific role of the hand in the life of a middle class gentleman and a working woman. While many Victorian authors could be studied in relation to workers of this period and offer material receptive to a theoretical partialist approach, this part has specifically chosen different, non-fiction material (diaries, letters, photographs) in order to establish the role of the hand and set the historical context for which to read *Pilgrimage*. For example, the work of Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy and George Eliot could all be subjects of this study. There

are myriad possibilities.¹ For the purposes of this modernist exploration, however, I have decided to veer away from Victorian authors of fiction and opted to cite non-fiction source material so as to explore the hand in context of the Victorian imagination without clouding the textual analysis with various periods. By reading Miriam's changing position in the light of Arthur's and Hannah's material and focusing on Miriam's relationship to hands (both to hers and to others), Part I aims to gain understanding of how the depiction of hands reflects these attitudes and how it can inform us of Miriam's social and gendered identity.

The term 'working hand' is of particular interest in that it is a term where the appendage acts as a *pars pro toto* for the individual, resulting in the person being simply referred to as a "hand". Not only does this term bodily disjoint the owner, but it dominates them and becomes their whole identity; they are no longer a person but a mere "hand". In fact, this is a name still used for designating manual labourers such as factory hands, farm hands and stage hands. While it is a term denoting a worker, the physical appearance of the hand is also important: the character and status of a servant can be read from the condition of their hand as it shows how much hard work they have done and have the ability to do. Emerging from *Pilgrimage* is Richardson's depiction of Miriam's hands; they are often present at significant times in Miriam's working life and operate as a means of conveying her more concealed feelings. The depiction of Miriam's hand becomes telling as she joins the working sphere; though she may not be doing manual labour, her hands are physically employed, especially in *The Tunnel*, via laborious and often monotonous tasks.

¹ As there are numerous sources in the Victorian period, this certainly offers potential for future study.

Throughout *Pilgrimage*, Miriam is at odds with her role as a worker. Being born into a prosperous middle class family, third of four daughters, her father later loses the family money and she is compelled into a series of different working roles – from teaching positions and governess roles to clerical work – Miriam frequently feels constrained by her unwanted working position but duty-bound to help her family financially. In this way, the representation of her hands can offer insight into her feelings towards her role as an employee and they become a signifier of her “labour” throughout her journey. The size, colour, texture and condition of Miriam’s hand are recurrent images throughout *Pilgrimage*: they are described in most situations as a gauge of her wellbeing, status and mood. When she is happy and comfortable her hands are often warm and soft, but when she is discontented and uncomfortable her hands are large, red, cold and, importantly, described as masculine. As such, hands also become significant as a gendered signifier, from men’s strong large hands to women’s small, dainty hands. Indeed Miriam holds something of an in-between position: she has large ‘hands like umbrellas’² denoting a masculine appearance and they are often swollen and red which denotes a working position. Both interpretations are far from the desired ladylike appearance and, socially, can position Miriam in a lower class “working woman” category thus complicating the construction of her identity.³ So the hands can act as a medium which offers insight into the individual’s more concealed thoughts and views.

Consequently, the physical hand of female workers holds many functions: it is the powerful tool of their trade, their character reference, and it is a term which defines them. It can be seen as a symbol of the working woman – whether she is a typist or a maid of all

² Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 56. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *I*.

³ To clarify from the start, the use of the term ‘working woman’ does not refer to the working prostitute but the status of a woman who is employed in any kind of paid labour.

work – and holding such strong investments, in terms of her character and identity, what is also of note is that the hands of the female workers are sexualised. In light of Victorian attitudes where perceived lower-class women are equated with lower morals, the sexualisation of female domestic workers within the house (an area explored later with reference to *Honeycomb*) and the spectacle of dancers and actresses is apparent. But *Pilgrimage* also sees new sites for sexualising women workers, such as the shop girl or office worker. These working women easily become objects on display and the emergence of women on the urban streets of London, traditionally a masculine arena with the only female presence being prostitutes, further problematises female agency in the construction of their sexual identity in the changing public sphere.

The physical hand, then, can become eroticised and in common with the focus of sexual interest, it has the subjective capacity to be both beautiful and repulsive. From the aesthetic appreciation of the attractive soft delicate jewelled hand with slender fingers and graceful nails to the calloused and horned hand with bent fingers and broken or bitten nails, hands become eroticised sites. Like many of Miriam's views, her opinion of her own hands is altogether changeable; in some moments she feels confident of and comforted by her hands and at other times she is repulsed by them, finding them aesthetically unattractive both to herself and in the eyes of others. This is also true of her opinion of others' hands, with her seeing them as either repulsive or highly attractive. Such a focus upon the aesthetic appeal, or not, of hands, certainly locates the hand as an eroticised site within the text.

But before exploring the working hand in *Pilgrimage*, I want to turn to the diaries of Arthur Munby. Following the studies of Diane Atkinson and Barry Reay, Part I starts

with an exploration of the gender and class connotations evident in Munby's and Hannah's relationship. Then, moving beyond the gender analysis of Atkinson's and Reay's work, it will give a more detailed bodily analysis of the particular role the hand plays in Munby's and Hannah's romance. Employing a theoretical partialist approach and focusing on the female hand as a signifier of women's labour, Munby's and Cullwick's diaries work as a starting point. This section, in particular, will explore the role of the female servant, the eroticisation and fetishisation of the hand, and the associated connotations of class and gender. Part I then moves to an investigation of Miriam's different employment; starting with *Honeycomb* where Miriam becomes a governess and contends with her position as what can be described as an "in-between" servant. Here, the hand will be used as a basis for a wider discussion of gendered identities, exploring areas such as smoking and table etiquette and considering how hands figure in displays of gender. *The Tunnel* will be used to investigate Miriam's working life when she takes a clerical position at a London dental practice and is faced with the class and gender problems of being an independent woman in an evolving public and professional sphere that is moving forward yet still straddling old boundaries.

HAND IN HAND: ARTHUR MUNBY AND HANNAH CULLWICK

To illuminate the particular role the hand plays in the Victorian imagination, the diaries, letters and photographs of Arthur Joseph Munby and his lover, Hannah, will be explored. What is significant about Munby, and the reason for his placement in this thesis, is that his explicit diaries offer a real insight into the role the hand played in the Victorian imagination. For Munby, the eroticised hand plays a key part which is overwhelmingly apparent from his material as he spent decades collecting stories, biographies, sketches, prints and photographs of working women's hands. Using the approach of theoretical partialism, alongside the eroticised hand, the working hand will also be explored as it is helpful to put the atmosphere and social connotations of working women which Miriam is to join in the context of previous Victorian attitudes. Here, Hannah's diaries provide illumination as they give detailed accounts of the gruelling life and experiences of a Victorian servant. Although Miriam does not become a maid of all work like Hannah, she is, nonetheless, a working woman. First as a pupil teacher and governess (albeit an upper servant, which itself locates her in somewhat of an in-between position) and then as a dental secretary. In these roles she, like Hannah, is faced with class assumptions and the physical employment of her hands. Therefore, in relation to the hand, this exploration reveals five key areas: the working life of a female servant; the construction of her identity; her social status; her perception in society; and her sexual identity. Munby provides the material for an interesting reading of gender and class in the lived experience of a Victorian fetishist and his working-class lover.

Munby presented himself as somewhat of an anti-hero: publicly working as a barrister and a civil servant with the Ecclesiastical Commission, while his alter ego, the fetishist “Massa”, pays working women to “black up” and pose for photographs in their filthy working attire. Growing up in a well-respected family in York, Munby attended Trinity College, Cambridge where he studied mathematics, theology and classics with the intention of joining the family business and becoming a lawyer. Although never interested in the profession, because of family expectations Munby moved to London, trained as a barrister and was called to the bar in November 1855. To counteract his despondency with his professional career, Munby cultivated his hobbies: he became a man of letters, wrote and published poetry, and took a position as an unpaid teacher at the Working Men’s College. But, his real passion was for working women. In 1859, he started work at the Ecclesiastical Commission as a civil servant, which, again, pleased his father more than himself. Then in 1873 he had entered into a clandestine marriage with his secret love, Hannah. They remained married (although not always living together) until her death in July 1909 and he followed her, dying from pneumonia in January 1910. Described by Barry Reay as ‘a connoisseur of working women’,¹ Munby’s fascination went against Victorian moral codes, but his passion was not revealed fully until forty years after his death. Munby bequeathed his materials to the British Museum (by reversion to Trinity College²), ‘on condition that they were not to be opened or examined before 1 Jan. 1950’.³ His deed-boxes were opened at Trinity College on 14th January 1950 and revealed a vast collection of manuscripts, letters, diaries and photographs. But, most importantly, the opening of the collection also revealed an unparalleled insight into the fascination, fetishes and life of a Victorian gentleman and his servant wife.

¹ Barry Reay, *Watching Hannah: Sexuality, Horror and Bodily Deformation in Victorian England* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), p. 7.

² See Derek Hudson, *Munby: Man of Two Worlds* (London: John Murray, 1972), p. 437.

³ Hudson, p. 1.

Munby's perversions and fetishes prove to be varied and vast, indeed a whole Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebbing book in one man. Reay argues that Munby can be seen as an example of the complexity of Victorian sexuality. He describes Munby's 'permasexuality', a term which moves away from the typical perception of a binary sexuality – public decency/private pornography – that critics such as Derek Hudson had previously proposed.⁴ Reay's suggestion describes something closer to a polymorphous sexuality 'that permeated life and culture, representations and perceptions'.⁵ Throughout his own and Hannah's diaries, Munby's multiple paraphilia becomes evident, including: voyeurism, partialism, transvestism, negrophilia, masochism, sadism, infantilism, pictophilia, mysophilia and numerous fetishes – workwomen's boots, slave chains, and wrist straps – to name but a few. In addition to this list, Munby was also fascinated by human horrors. Reay's study graphically explores Munby's sexual interest in the more unusual. This "horror" book is not for the faint hearted, the chapter on Munby's 'noseless' women, detailing his association and fascination with women whose faces had been ravaged beyond recognition by cancer, lupus and other diseases, is perhaps the most extreme. It offers a glimpse of the extent of his perversions and, also, the extent to which he would go to satisfy his needs. However, the particular part of Munby's multifarious sexuality, which will be the focus of this study, is partialism of the hand. While I have discussed theoretical partialism in the Introduction, it is important to put sexual partialism and fetishism in context.

Partialism's categorisation has had a mixed history; originally termed by Albert Eulenberg, it was deemed part of the wider category of fetishism by psychologists and sexologists such as, Binet, Freud, Hirschfield and Krafft-Ebing, who investigated the root

⁴ See Hudson.

⁵ Reay, p. 165.

psychology of such practices. It was later removed from this category and placed under Paraphilia Not Otherwise Specified in the 1987 3rd edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R)* where it remains in the most current edition (*DSM-IV-TR*) and is listed as the ‘exclusive focus on part of the body’.⁶ However for the purposes of this chapter, when referring to partialism we return to the context of nineteenth and early twentieth-century psychoanalysis and sexology where it falls under the category of fetishism.

Freud is helpful here: his psychoanalytical work argues that the male fetish is a result of the child’s inability to deal with women’s (specifically the mother’s) castration, fearing their own castration and therefore redirecting their interest to another organ/object:

Aversion from the real female genitals, which is never lacking in any fetishist, also remains as an indelible stigma of the repression that has taken place. One can now see what the fetish achieves and how it is enabled to persist. It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it.⁷

Therefore, for the man, the fetish object comes into being when this realisation process is interrupted and it acts as a transference object allowing the fetishist to continue with knowledge but without threat: ‘the fetish itself has become a vehicle both of denying and of asseverating the fact of castration’.⁸ To expand the Freudian view of fetishes it is worth turning to one of the leading cataloguers of sexually deviant behaviour in the nineteenth century – Krafft-Ebing. His *Psychopathia Sexualis* offers numerous case studies which detail multiple fetishes (including partialism) and explores the underlying psychology:

Just as, in physiological fetichism, [sic] the eye, the hand, the foot and the hair of woman frequently become fetiches, so, in the pathological domain, the same portions of the body become the sole objects of sexual interest. [...] instead of

⁶ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM-IV-TR]*, 4th ed., (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000), p. 576.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, ‘Fetishism’ in *Collected Papers*, Vol.V (London: Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1950), p. 200.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 203.

coitus, strange manipulations of the fetich become the object of the desire, – this it is that makes the case pathological.⁹

For Munby it is the hand which is fetishised and his focus of sexual interest but, as is often the case with fetishists (and, as we have seen, Munby is no exception), they can have more than one focus.

The fetishisation of the hand can be placed in one of the more frequent categories of fetishism but even within this subtype there can be many differing factors in determining it. Discussing the underlying pathology of the most common types of fetish – ‘The HAIR, the HAND, the FOOT of woman, or the expression of the EYE’ – Krafft-Ebing states that: ‘Frequently the *hand* or the *foot* possess an attractiveness no less powerful; but in these instances masochistic and sadistic feelings often – though not always – assist in determining the peculiar kind of fetich’.¹⁰ Krafft-Ebing highlights how these sadomasochistic tendencies are often present in hand fetishists through some of his case studies, such as Case 25:

Coitus was possible, but only when the patient called up the idea that the girl’s fingers were bleeding. Without the assistance of this idea no erection was possible. The cruel thought of cutting was limited to the woman’s hands. At the time of greatest sexual excitement, simply the sight of the hand of an attractive woman was sufficient to induce the most violent erections.¹¹

This more extreme case of fetishism shows the sadistic erotic pleasure derived from the mutilation of hands. As its counterpart, Krafft-Ebing catalogues examples of masochistic humiliation which usually take the form of the binding of one’s hands or punishment carried out by the hand. However, not all hand fetishes require such extreme sadomasochistic impulses; Case 90 is an example which has a greater similarity to Munby’s interests:

⁹ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Phychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1998), p. 147.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 13, original emphasis.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 70.

The essential thing in woman that excited him was the sight of her beautiful hands; L. was far more impressed when he touched a beautiful female hand than he would have been had he seen its possessor in a state of complete nudity.¹²

What is clear from Munby's diaries and photographs is that the women he desires are not overtly sexualised in an obvious sense. Other than a select few (for example, one of Hannah as a topless chimney sweep (*figure 7*) and an "exotic" photograph which was given to him, depicting a bare-breasted African woman in tribal jewellery), similar to Krafft-Ebing's Case 90, the overwhelming majority of Munby's photographs do not depict women in 'a state of complete nudity'. However, the photographs can be deemed to be sexualised as they directly relate to his personal fetishes. Indeed, Munby's particular sexual interest and how he satisfies his need can easily locate him in the same category as Krafft-Ebing's "sexual deviants".

Munby's fetishistic desires were explored and sated mainly through observation rather than interaction. However, in 1854, Munby met Hannah Cullwick, a working-class woman who would become the secret love of his life and eventually his wife. He saw her first on Oxford Street and was instantly attracted to 'her clothing, her large bare round ruddy arms and her laborious hands...those of the humblest servant'.¹³ From the very start of their relationship, Hannah's hands played a key role in his attraction to her. Hannah, too, was attracted to Munby and agreed to meet him again. During their fifty-five year relationship, Hannah had to travel far and wide to keep their romance alive and, more importantly, secret. She took work in places such as Margate, the Isle of White, Essex, Suffolk, Brighton, not to mention the numerous positions she held in London; it was her very position as a working woman that was a key factor in their relationship. Through

¹² Ibid, p. 149.

¹³ The diaries and letters of Arthur J. Munby 1828-1910 (Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge) *Visits to Hannah*, May 1891, p. 18. Hereafter the diaries and letters will be designated Munby.

Munby's lessons, Hannah became fully literate, enjoyed reading Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy, wrote letters for other servants and read to them. In later years, after their marriage, Hannah attended the Working Women's College in London and enrolled in English Literature and Physiology classes.¹⁴ But what is starting to sound like a Pygmalion tale is, actually, far from the case; the spark that held the pair together was centred on the *disparity* of their social positioning and appearance. Even after many years of marriage, Hannah refused to take the position of his "wife" fully and remained his servant first and foremost. During their courtship, Hannah would secretly relate all the details of her filthy and hardworking sixteen hour day to her diary, which Munby would later read. This correspondence was to become the medium of their relationship. Her education enabled the detailed writing of her diaries, a point which Munby insisted upon, ultimately making their relationship unique and, importantly, accessible to the modern critic.

Hannah's own sexual identity is interesting. Her willingness to please Munby is evident but her own masochistic desires hint towards her role in their relationship being more than simply subjugated. While she is clearly influenced by Munby's desires, the details of her own pleasures and her active involvement in their affair locate her sexual identity as self-determining. Indeed, it was on her insistence that they did not live together after they were married. Although her initial attraction may have been driven by her economic concerns, it certainly did not continue as such. Their relationship had its turbulent times: she had opportunities to leave him and, at first, she refused his marriage proposals several times, but from her diaries it is clear that she was in love with him and stayed with him for this reason. As for the sexual fetishes the couple enjoyed, this too, was not all upon Munby's instruction, with Hannah initiating some of them. Her enjoyment in

¹⁴ See Hudson.

the liberation she found in their relationship is evident in her diaries; she detailed occasions on which she would strip her clothes and shimmy up the chimney and knock shelves of soot from the walls so it would fall upon her and make her black. Often in certain houses where she worked she would scrub and clean the chimneys, but in others, those employing a separate chimney sweep, she would simply climb up and enjoy becoming soot black for her Massa, who would equally enjoy the experience voyeuristically through reading her diaries: ‘The soot was thick all round and soft and warm and I lay in it and fetched a shower or two down wi’ my arms and it trickled over me like a bath’.¹⁵ All the details of this would be caringly entered into her diary with explicit details of how hard she worked and how dirty and sweaty she got – certainly enough to satisfy Munby’s mysophilic desires.

Krafft-Ebing discusses the rather neglected area of fetishes in women, but these tend to be categorised as ‘masculine qualities’: ‘physical strength, courage, nobility of the mind, chivalry, self-confidence, even self-assertion, insolence, bravado, and a conscious show of mastery over the weaker sex’.¹⁶ Continued in this list are stereotypical idols such as the actor, the singer, the athlete, the criminal and, of course, ‘it is a well-known fact that the female heart has a predominant weakness for the military uniforms’.¹⁷ Other than hair (especially the beard – the male ‘emblem of virility’¹⁸), the tone of the voice and the eye, female fetishes (unlike like male fetishes) are distinctly situated in “qualities” rather than in ‘the intense and recurrent sexual arousal to: non-living objects’.¹⁹ However, like the majority of theory contemporary with Krafft-Ebing’s writings on women’s sexual impulses

¹⁵ The diaries and letters of Hannah Cullwick 1833-1909 (Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge), 26 April 1865, Hereafter the diaries and letters will be designated Cullwick.

¹⁶ Krafft-Ebing, p. 15.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Idem.

¹⁹ Martin P. Kafka, ‘The DSM Diagnostic Criteria for Fetishism’, *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* Vol. 39, No. 2, (2009), p. 357.

and preferences, this is mere conjecture as he admits: ‘The author has thus far not succeeded in obtaining facts with regard to the pathology of fetichism in women’.²⁰ Krafft-Ebing’s account of female fetishism is rather striking considering the perspective of even later writings such as Wilhelm Stekel’s *Sexual Aberrations*.²¹ Stekel argues that the lack of female fetishists is because: ‘a creative spirit is necessary even in the construction of a fetishism. I believe that this is one of the reasons why there are so few women among fetishists [...] It is possible that the reasons may be found in the fact that women lack the rich capacity of men’.²² Therefore, as Joseph LoPiccolo asserts in his introduction to the 1998 Arcade edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, one is ‘struck by the relevance, farsightedness and “modernity” of [Krafft-Ebing’s] views’.²³ So, while other allusions to women throughout Krafft-Ebing’s study are typical of its period (females viewed in relation to their physical beauty) it, nonetheless, must be acknowledged that even reference to the preferred sexual practices of women is a significantly advanced approach at this time. While it may be a rarity for Stekel, Hannah’s personal, female desires are certainly something that would have made an interesting case study for these sexologists and psychologists. But, notably, it is Munby not Hannah who has the hand fetish.

Munby’s own fascination with and attraction to hands is overwhelmingly clear and Hannah realises how her hands play a fundamental role in his attraction to her. Yet, interestingly, they also play a key part in her sense of her own identity. They are a signifier of her hard labour, her obedience, her lower social station, her strength, her masculine

²⁰ Krafft-Ebing, p. 15.

²¹ See Wilhelm Stekel, *Sexual Aberrations: The Phenomena of Fetishism in Relation to Sex, Vol.II* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1930).

²² Wilhelm Stekel, *Sexual Aberrations: The Phenomena of Fetishism in Relation to Sex, Vol.II* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1930), p. 341.

²³ Joseph LoPiccolo, ‘Introduction’ to Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1998), p. ix.



figure 1: Hannah's hands



figure 2: Hannah



figure 3: Four pitwomen, 1867



figure 4: Four women



figure 5: Paper mill girls, 1863



figure 6: Close-up of Hannah

qualities and they are a way in which she can commune with Munby. Carrying this photograph with him at all times, *figure 1* epitomises Munby's partialist desires and his attraction to Hannah's hands. Here, Hannah's large and coarse hands are plainly exhibited holding a brush and showing the physical marks of her labour. Her hands are an obvious declaration of her class status but also of her ambiguous gendered identity. *Figure 2* illustrates the gender ambiguity with this image clearly displaying Hannah's strength as a muscular woman with one large hand holding her broom, wrist-strap visible, and the other pulling the sleeve up around her muscular arm, which is contrasted with her feminine head and neat hair above.

In many of Munby's photographs, the hands of the women (and Hannah in particular) are key; they are displayed gloveless either holding the tools of their trade or simply displayed on their laps (*figure 3, 4 & 5*). Munby is particularly enthralled by the pitwomen he encountered. Clad in their masculine trousers (quite a shocking delight in itself), sweaty from their hard labour and black with coal dust, these pitwomen embody many of Munby's fetishes. The photograph of the pitwomen (*figure 3 & 4*) really highlights the feminine and masculine contrast in each of these women, with their masculine build and attire juxtaposed with their feminine smoothed, styled hair and earrings. Also, note the display of the hands with all four women in each of these photographs, clearly exhibiting them as large, coarse and blackened. This is also true of *figure 6*, where Hannah's large hands are plainly displayed against her bonnet-clad female face and white-collared, print dress. Her wrist-strap is also evident and the dirty fingernails of her rough hands frame her delicate chin and draw the view towards her feminine lips. The composition of this photograph can certainly be understood to gratify Munby's particular desires.

The physical appearance of the hand is especially important as it can tell so much of a woman's character, easily informing the observer of the class, societal position and occupation of its owner. Coarse red hands would certainly indicate a woman who worked, while soft white hands out of kid gloves told of a respectable lady. This is something with which *Pilgrimage's* protagonist, Miriam, frequently struggles; her large, often red, hands are the source of discomfort and anxiety for her, especially when in social and public situations. Richardson's and Munby's heroines differ in this aspect: Miriam's hands are something to conceal and she often does not feel in possession of them whereas Hannah's hands, and especially the appearance of them, are an essential part of her and her identity. As Diane Atkinson claims: 'Hannah's hands were her pride and joy – were a testimonial to hard work whenever a new place was sought. As well as their character from a previous employer, all servants' hands were examined for their worth'.¹ Hannah takes pride in her hands: they are emblematic of her identity, they reaffirm her position as a good servant and, more importantly, they reaffirm her position with Munby, 'Massa was much pleased with my hands because they were red and coarse'.² But, Miriam's working hands are far from her pride and joy: as a site of embarrassment they act as a testament to her uncomfortable social and gendered position and problematise a satisfactory construction of her identity.

The class distinction which is so obvious in the appearance of a lady's hands when compared to those of a servant is another contrast which Munby's fetishises. His enjoyment of this class contrast moves further to include gender disparity, where he is fascinated by the size and manliness of female servants' hands (the very problem with

¹ Diane Atkinson, *Love & Dirt: The Marriage of Arthur Munby & Hannah Cullwick* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 81.

² Cullwick, 18 February 1865, p. 25.

which Miriam contends). He commented in his diaries on an observation he made on a female servant waiting upon him and his companions:

Now, though her hands were larger than those of the three men at table – though they were much coarser in texture, much ruder in tint – was she any the less feminine for that? Are the relations of the sexes really inverted, when three men sit at table, with hands delicate & jewelled, and a woman stands behind and waits, offering the dishes with a large coarse hand that makes her master's look almost ladylike?³

Ever tantalised by contrasts, Munby's interest in this gender inversion can offer more insights about him and his desires but can also be read in a number of ways other than mere fetishism. Reay suggests that it can possibly figure as a method in which the Victorian male could project his homosexual desires onto the body of masculine woman and that this could perhaps be the reason for the male fascination with lesbianism. However, it seems that Munby is more interested in a sense of transgendered identity within *one* person; not the definite change from one sex to the other but the oscillation between the two sexes within one body. So, it is the rustic beauty with the large coarse masculine hands or the 'bearded man of more than average height & bulk'⁴ who possesses small delicate white hands, which stimulate him. Indeed, this is seen to be played out in his own relationship with Hannah:

We had a long kiss...I licked his boots once of my own accord...then Massa looked at my hands and came and put 'em alongside his. Mine was brown and looked hardworking by his and after that Massa told me to lift him up and I did it quite easy and I carried him round the room.⁵

This passage really highlights some of the key roles Hannah and Munby play – she is subservient but moves beyond this role by performing acts she knows will please him (and clearly, her). He is the observer and compares his hands with hers, enjoying the contrast, and he then directs her into what can be seen as an act of infantilism, where Hannah carries

³ Munby, vol. 4, pp. 121-2.

⁴ Munby, vol. 24, pp. 2-3.

⁵ Cullwick, 13 May 1865, pp. 75-77.



figure 7: Hannah as a chimney sweep



figure 8: Hannah as a man

him almost with the ease of carrying a child. Munby appears to desire dual positions, on the one hand being the controlling teacher and provider (the man) while on the other being cared for and doted on (the child/woman). In this gender reversal Hannah can be seen as becoming the masculine hero figure carrying the damsel, which may be read as a playing out of homoerotic desires. But Munby's overwhelming dominance in all areas – social, financial, intellectual – allows him to relinquish his dominant male position in private and succumb to the power of a masculine woman. Whether it is homoeroticism or infantilism or the pleasure of pure duality, Munby is fascinated by the masculinised woman and the feminised male.

Munby and Hannah explore the idea of gender inversion and the photograph of Hannah posing as a chimney sweep (*figure 7*) can be read as a culmination of many of Munby's fetishes. Hannah's gender is inverted as a male chimney sweep, she "blacks up" for this role, her slave chain around her neck and her wrist strap are both evident as a sign of his ownership, and, in minimal clothes, she accurately portrays a picture of subservience as she looks up at her Massa (who is cropped from this photograph with just a glimpse of his foot remaining). Indeed, Munby said that Hannah's 'degradation' in this photograph, 'was something, truly'.¹ Munby and Hannah took this transgendered role further and for a period of time Hannah cross-dressed as a man when she would be seen out with him; *figure 8* highlights this gender ambiguity which is so apparent in Munby's fascination. Here Hannah poses as a man, a guise she adopted, and indeed suggested, when travelling with Munby. This may be seen as an obvious homoerotic endeavour; however, with Munby's continual desire for contrast and the need to be in control, he will gain his pleasure from having the knowledge that there is a female body beneath the masculine

¹ Munby, vol. 15, pp. 187-9, p. 73.

clothes. While her status as a ‘rough’ working woman could be seen in her strong build and work-worn hands, her face shows none of this, which is another example of the contrast Munby enjoyed. Keeping her hair cropped short, wearing a suit and along with the gentle appearance of her face, Hannah is able to pass as a man. But markedly in this photograph, as Reay also notes,² Hannah’s hands are kept out of view. Perhaps her large, strong hands were, indeed, too large and strong for a man of the status she is trying to emulate. This only goes to extend the gender disparity further: Hannah, as a woman, cross-dresses to pass as a man but her own “female” characteristics are too masculine for that of a man, something surely Munby would have delighted in.

Munby’s fascination with both hands and gender disparity can be seen in his eighty-five page poem “Dorothy”, which details his captivation with hands.³ The poem tells of a farm servant, her large hands and deals with gender inversion where the men who touch Dorothy’s hands are feminised. Gender ambiguity is seen in the contrast between Dorothy’s rustic womanly beauty and her large, rough, calloused hands:

He no effeminate man, she a most womanly maid –
Curious, I say, to reflect that the hands were not as their owners:
That which was small and refined, slender and soft, was the man’s;
That which was clumsy and coarse, and big, was the hand of the maiden!
He was the lady, it seem’d; *she* was the muscular man.⁴

This recalls his earlier observations of the female servant waiting upon his dinner; his question marks and use of ‘curious’ in both examples highlights his inquisitiveness and also his pleasure in exploring such questions of gender disparity.

² See Reay, p. 123.

³ The poem took over a year to complete and, in 1880, it was published anonymously by Kegan Paul. It received little attention until eight months later when poet, Robert Browning, sent a letter to Kegan Paul detailing his admiration of the poem. Browning’s endorsement was used to create publicity for the poem which was a success and, while Munby enjoyed an American edition of the poem, his anonymity was no longer enjoyed. For further details see Derek Hudson, *Munby: Man of Two Worlds* (London: John Murray, 1972).

⁴ Arthur J. Munby, “Dorothy” (London, 1880), p. 45.

While clearly Munby's sexual preference was for women, he also had what can only be described as infatuations with certain male figures. He was a great admirer of Charles Dickens and his work.⁵ He saw him many times as he walked about London, but never spoke to him. It seems that Munby is attracted to the male mind and its capacity for intellectual pursuits and creativity; he surrounds himself with learned male friends from Cambridge and the Working Men's College in London, where he became good friends with John Ruskin and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.⁶ Another male mind that Munby greatly admired was Alfred Tennyson. Visiting the Isle of White, Munby passed Tennyson's house and was able to catch a glimpse of him and, later, when travelling on a boat, he was able to obtain a better image of his idol:

⁵ Interestingly in *Great Expectations*, Dickens too features the hands of the housekeeper as she serves Mr Jagger and his guests at dinner. Strikingly similar to Munby's own observations, Molly, the housekeeper, and her disfigured wrists become a spectacle for Mr Jagger to exhibit:

'Now the housekeeper was at that time clearing the table; my guardian, taking no heed of her, but with the side of his face turned from her, was leaning back in his chair biting the side of his forefinger and showing an interest in Drummle, that, to me, was quite inexplicable. Suddenly, he clapped his large hand on the housekeeper's, like a trap, as she stretched it across the table. So suddenly and smartly did he do this, that we all stopped in our foolish contention.

"If you talk of strength," said Mr. Jagger, "I'll show you a wrist. Molly, let them see your wrist."

Her entrapped hand was on the table, but she had already put her other hand behind her waist. "Master," she said, in a low voice, with her eyes attentively and entreatingly fixed upon him. "Don't."

"I'll show you a wrist," repeated Mr. Jagger, with an immovable determination to show it. "Molly, let them see your wrist."

"Master," she again murmured. "Please!"

"Molly," said Mr. Jagger, not looking at her, but obstinately looking at the opposite side of the room, "Let them see both your wrists. Show them. Come!"

He took his hand from hers, and turned that wrist up on the table. She brought her other hand from behind her, and held the two out side by side. The last wrist was much disfigured,—deeply scarred and scarred across and across. When she held her hands out she took her eyes from Mr. Jagger, and turned them watchfully on every one of the rest of us in succession.

"There's power here," said Mr. Jagger, coolly tracing out the sinews with his forefinger. "Very few men have the power of wrist that this woman has. It's remarkable what mere force of grip there is in these hands. I have had occasion to notice many hands; but I never saw stronger in that respect, man's or woman's, than these."

While he said these words in a leisurely, critical style, she continued to look at every one of us in regular succession as we sat. The moment he ceased, she looked at him again. "That'll do, Molly," said Mr. Jagger, giving her a slight nod; "you have been admired, and can go." She withdrew her hands and went out of the room' (Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1881), pp. 241-2).

Here while Molly is said to have 'powerful' hands, it is still Mr Jagger who holds the dominant position in all aspects. He 'entraps' her hands, is clearly socially dominant, uses her as amusement for his guests, and then dismisses her once she has fulfilled her purpose. Presumably as Munby was an admirer of Dickens, he would have read *Great Expectations* and certainly could have enjoyed the display of gender and class disparity between the gentleman and his female servant.

⁶ See Hudson.

T about 5 feet 8, largely made, hands big and muscular: wore odd careless dress, tall wideawake, camlet cloak, loose trousers, frock coat and open shirtfront – no gloves. Long wild curling hair: beard thin on cheeks, full and wild round lips and chin... and his face supreme in manliness and mental power.⁷

This entry in his diary suggests something of an infatuated attitude towards an idol or an object of desire, which seems to differ slightly from Munby's usual interest in gender disparity. He is in awe of Tennyson and his manly appearance but, more importantly, he is in awe of Tennyson's capacity for 'mental power'. Also, as is typical of Munby, Tennyson's 'big and muscular' gloveless hands do not go unnoticed. This side of Munby presents his childlike infatuations; in this way, and in most regarding Munby's personal desires, he continually stays out of focus, veers away from interaction instead choosing to observe from afar. This may then suggest that Munby is, in fact, not secure in his own masculinity and is only able to express himself with inferior subjects who are less likely to be judgemental – not simply women, but *working* women.

Despite having met, talked with and photographed countless working women, there was only one who understood him completely and enabled him to satisfy all his secret and private desires. In 1865, eleven years after their first meeting, Hannah sent a Valentine's card to Munby with an imprint of her 'blackened' hand as a symbol of her understanding of their love:

I got the oil and black lead in the scullery and the paper and I blacked my hand o'er it and laid it on the paper. It came out broad and thick and I thought o' a verse and wrote it on the paper and this is it:

'Massa, you'll know what is meant
By this black thing of a hand
And as its lines deepen and fingers get bent
So love in my heart for its owner withstand.'⁸

⁷ Munby, 23 May 1865.

⁸ Cullwick, 13 February 1865, p. 32.

Atkinson suggests that there are four attributes Munby looked for in his ideal woman: ‘big hands, rustic beauty, hard work and submission’.⁹ From this verse, Hannah tells Munby the four things which would no doubt tantalise him. The image of her ‘broad and thick’ hand fills the first criterion; secondly the eroticised hand highlights her own personal beauty; thirdly, the physicality of her rough lined and bent fingers indicates her laborious working hand, and finally, most importantly, the card, verse and imprint of Hannah’s hand illustrates the continuing ownership he has over his “slave”. Thus, Hannah’s hands become the medium of their relationship and are crucial to the construction of her identity. Indeed three of these four attributes could be ascribed to Miriam, with the last – submission – perhaps, being the least applicable.



While Munby can easily be deemed as one of Krafft-Ebing’s “sexual deviants” with dark sexual fetishes, it is not that black and white. He is not an unacceptable figure in society, in fact quite the opposite: working for the Ecclesiastical Commission, teaching at the Working Men’s College, supporting the Working Women’s College, part of artistic and dynamic social circles – all this outwardly places him as a respectable member of society. This position reaffirms Reay’s contention that in Munby the full complexity of Victorian sexuality can be found. Munby does not force any of the women he encounters, interviews, sketches or photographs. Although their very rank in society places them in a position which lacks agency and they are driven by external factors such as poverty and an unequal class position, they are not driven by fear and intimidation. Indeed, some women refuse him but he does not threaten them, he simply, perhaps condescendingly, puts it down to

⁹ Atkinson, p. 163.

their naïve fear of photography as a form of witchcraft. So what makes his long, personal and sexually explorative relationship with Hannah so significant is that it is mutually consensual and both parties gain from the relationship.

Beneath the breadth of Munby's perversions and the weight of societal judgment we are left with the hand – the hardworking hand, the writing and thus communicating hand, the dirty hand, the contrasting hands, the eroticised and fetishised hand, the gendered hand – which symbolises the attraction between them, their affirmation of each other, the confirmation of their roles and ultimately their relationship as a whole. Seen as illustrative of the hand in Victorian imagination, it is in relation to these connotations and attitudes that Miriam's working life will be read.

THE HIRED HAND

Using the template that Munby and Hannah provided, a theoretical partialist approach to the depiction of Miriam's hands will be used to explore various aspects of the construction of her identity: her life as a woman worker; her relationship to work and the development of her identity; her social status; how she is perceived in society and the construction of her sexual identity. With regard to Miriam's working life, the part of *Pilgrimage* that is of interest to this study takes place later than Hannah and Munby's story and sees the transition as women move beyond their traditional boundaries into the traditional masculine workforce of clerical and shop workers. It is Miriam's working life that informs much of the narrative of *Pilgrimage* and becomes one of the key themes as she struggles to define herself as a woman worker. Her journey in this new sphere is particularly pertinent because she illustrates the class connotations associated with a working woman but also the gender confusion the move brings. But before she reaches "her" London and the position of a dental secretary, Miriam has other, more familial employment. Her time as a governess in *Honeycomb* shows an important stage in Miriam's journey. With London in her sights, this period of her life shows the initial stages of her developing independent, New Woman identity. The workforce of governesses was 25,000 strong in the middle years of the nineteenth-century, a group which Richardson was later to join.¹ While it was once a position only found in aristocratic families, the emergence of the governess in the homes of the middle class brings their role into popular imagination. Naturally, the 'Governess Problem' was reflected in literature but, as Trev Broughton and Ruth Symes argue, this representation 'was out of proportion to the number of self-identified

¹ See Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993).

governesses' which were only 'one thirteenth of the number of female domestic servants'.² In this way, *Honeycomb* can be seen to be part of a wide array of governess fiction, ranging from Charlotte Brontë's 1847 *Jane Eyre* and William Thackeray's 1848 *Vanity Fair* to Henry James's 1898 *The Turn of the Screw*, which details the difficult transition for governesses from home life to a working life in another person's home. Although *Pilgrimage* comes after the height of Victorian 'governessing' and the change in state schooling and other roles such as clerical work had started to become accessible for middle-class women, as Broughton and Symes argue: 'the governess remained a vulnerable and isolated actor in the landscape of employment, and thus retained her hold on the British imagination even into the twentieth century'.³ So why was the governess such an appealing subject? Kathryn Hughes perhaps answers this question when she discusses the societal predicament of the governess which is reflected in the voluminous Victorian etiquette manuals advising employers and employees:

what these articles do illuminate is the way in which the tensions which the governess seemed to embody – concerning social respectability, sexual morality and financial self-reliance – touched a raw nerve with a whole swathe of middle-class Britain. The figure of the governess took on a significance to her contemporaries out of all proportion to her actual numbers. Exploring the way in which her situation gripped the imagination tells us as much about the aspirations and anxieties of the mid Victorian as it does about the governess' actual working conditions.⁴

What is significant about *Pilgrimage* is that Richardson offers the lived experience of a member of such a workforce which did include concerns of social respectability, sexual morality and supporting oneself financially and did continue to the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century; thus the text can provide insight into the 'tensions which the governess seemed to embody' not only for her employer but for herself.

² Trev Broughton & Ruth Symes, *The Governess: An Anthology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 9.

³ Broughton & Symes, p. 11.

⁴ Hughes, p. xiii.

Governessing

We join *Pilgrimage* when Mr Henderson has lost the family's money and as a result the family's position in society is significantly altered. The Henderson sisters try to deal with their fallen situation and difficult financial circumstances, as Lois Cucullu claims, 'by finding work or by marrying, in other words, by finding alternate means of supporting themselves'.⁵ But it is Miriam who sets the precedent by being the first to join the working sphere and seek employment as a teacher by 'answering the advertisement and settling it all' with a school in Germany.⁶ A sense of her independence is evident from the beginning as she states: 'You know, I *know*, girls, that things are as absolutely ghastly this time as they can possibly be and that something must be done' and she is admired by her sisters for this, with Harriet wishing 'I'd got brains' so she could also work and Eve admiring Miriam's resilience 'Yes—you're so strong' (*I*, pp. 18-19, original emphasis). Miriam's departure from the family home and entrance into the workforce acts as a catalyst for the other Henderson sisters, who also embark on their own futures away from the support of their parents, with Eve taking a position as a governess in a family and Harriett and Sarah both marrying.

After her first role as a teacher in Germany with the restrictions and surveillance of Fraulein Pfaff and her second teaching position with the Pernes in North London, *Honeycomb* sees Miriam taking a position as a governess for a wealthy family, the Corries, at Newlands. Miriam's role as a pseudo-member of the family acts as a means of illustrating her liminality as an employee within a "society" family. The position of a governess is something of an uneasy locality, in that she interacts with the family yet is not

⁵ Lois Cucullu, 'Over-Eating: *Pilgrimage*'s Food Mania and the *Flânerie* of Public Foraging', *Modernist Cultures*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2006), p. 46.

⁶ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 19. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *I*.

a member, she is a paid employee yet is not placed with other servants. As Diane Atkinson states, ‘Governesses inhabited a limbo: sometimes they were the daughters of the middle class who had fallen on hard times’ or they were daughters of the less wealthy who were trying to rise in society.⁷ Kathryn Hughes also argues this point: ‘Becoming a governess was the only acceptable way of earning money open to the increasing number of middle-class women whose birth and education defined them as ladies, yet whose families were unable to support them in leisure’.⁸ And this is certainly true of Miriam when she joins the Corrie family as a governess for their two children.

At Newlands, Miriam is afforded many advantages: she has her own luxurious bedroom; she teaches the children though only spending a few hours a day with them; she dines with Mr and Mrs Corrie and their guests in the evenings; and she even takes the Victoria carriage to London with Mrs Corrie for shopping expeditions. However, the difficulty in her new position is that this is not Miriam’s own family, she is not one of the Corrie’s weekend guests – she is their employee and their relationship has prescribed boundaries. Indeed Miriam provides the Corries with evidence of their social status, as Hughes argues: ‘For many of these families one of the most important functions of the governess was to show off their wealth and social prestige. Her presence in their midst was proof that the lady of the house could afford to absent herself from even the least degrading aspect of womanhood’.⁹ The economic exchange of money for services fundamentally changes their relationship and regardless of the social time Miriam spends with the Corries and their acquaintances, both parties are all too aware of the social divide. With this division so evident she is subject to the judgement of the superior women, especially in the

⁷ Diane Atkinson, *Love & Dirt: The Marriage of Arthur Munby & Hannah Cullwick* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 77.

⁸ Hughes, p. xvi.

⁹ Hughes, p. 21.

feminine field of fashion: ‘Both women were facing her and she felt anything would be better than their united contemplations of her brown stuff dress with its square sleeves and brown straw hat with black ribbon and its yellow paper buttercups’ (*I*, p. 411). Equally, she is aware of the disparity of their social positions: “‘I am the paid governess. You must not talk to me as you would to each other; I am an inferior and can never be an intimate’” (*I*, p. 431). Though this unequal status would usually locate her as a servant, her position is further problematised as she is above the other servants in the household, some of whom even wait upon her and bring breakfast to her room, thus giving her an in-between status.

Ultimately, Miriam’s middle class upbringing enables her to see herself as different or, more accurately, superior to the Corrie’s other servants. For example, the parlourmaid, Wiggerson, whose appearance is described with the typical working ‘large red hands’ (*I*, p. 361) reminiscent of Hannah Cullwick’s; however, this is an image that Miriam will later draw upon to describe her own working hands. While Miriam appreciates Wiggerson’s proficiency, watching her as she flits about the house taking care of all her tasks with ‘her undisturbed hands once more at their swift work’ (*I*, p. 399), she is aware of the fundamental distinction between herself and the other servants. This is especially perceptible as she muses over the fellow woman worker: ‘You’ll never know you’re a servant.... I think perhaps I will’ (*I*, p. 361). There is a difficult balance between Miriam and the other servants; she appreciates how they commit themselves to their work, admiring Wiggerson’s adeptness at being a servant, a skill Miriam knows she will never truly possess, but equally she appreciates how she is above them in station. This position of limbo – not an equal of the Corries but not truly a servant – causes ambiguity in Miriam’s and other peoples’ perception of her social situation. Indeed, Miriam knows the middle class world with all its benefits, of which she should be part, and also tries to define her

emerging New Woman role whilst being entirely aware that her current working identity fits neither. Ultimately this leaves her in a state of uncertainty: “‘I suppose I’m a new woman – I’ve said I am now, anyhow,’” she reflected, wondering in the background of her determination how she would reconcile the role with her work as a children’s governess’ (*I*, p. 436).

The sense of the Hendersons’ social decline is especially evident in *Honeycomb*, as had Mr Richardson not lost the family money perhaps the Hendersons’ lifestyle would be more akin to that of the Corries. Again, this is particularly important for Miriam’s position within society: she is clearly an intellectual and an accomplished woman denoting a middle-class standing, yet this is overshadowed by her role as an employee which undoubtedly locates her in a working-class position. Driven, as many women in service were, by economic restraints, Miriam has to resign herself to her new lower status but this also has further ramifications for her gendered identity as it changes the relationship between her work and her perception of femininity. However, the type of work can help to counteract this conflict in constructions of femininity, as Broughton and Symes suggest: ‘It was the pseudo-domestic character of governessing, needless to say, that rendered it sufficiently respectable to be considered by ladies of refinement’.¹⁰ Driven predominantly by economic factors, Miriam recognises in *Backwater* that a position within a family, rather than her, then, current teaching post, would be more beneficial to their family’s failing financial status: “‘I’m going to look for a place in a family, after next term. I shall give notice when I get back. You get more money in a family, Eve says, and home life, and if you haven’t a home they’re only too glad to have you there in the holidays too’” (*I*, p. 306). Going into a family may achieve more money but it also gives a semblance of a

¹⁰ Broughton & Symes, p. 11.

home life, one which the Henderson girls lack after the decline of the family's situation and their mother's deteriorating health. The offer of staying with a family over the holidays appears to be appealing to Miriam but perhaps a little naïve, as evidently an employer would want an all-year-round servant. In fact, Mrs Corrie is rather open about her "ownership" of Miriam, and talks of her not letting Miriam become engaged while she is in her employment, playfully suggesting that Miriam "shall marry when my poor little old kiddies are grown up. We'll find you a very nice one, with plenty of money" (*I*, p. 373). Of course, underlying this flippant and jovial remark is a sense of Mrs Corrie's possession of Miriam; though said lightly, Mrs Corrie is asserting her authority and stating that once she is "done" with Miriam, she will pass her to another employer – a husband.

Miriam's future, like Hannah's, is determined by her economic situation, even though Gerald, her future brother-in-law, warns her, "You take my advice, my dear girl. Don't go into a family. Eve'll find it out before she's much older" (*I*, p. 306). Miriam is determined to try to salvage their situation but feels the weight of this family burden:

a small black cloud of disgrace hanging over her father. At the time of its appearance, when the extent of his embarrassment was exactly known, she had sunk for a while under the conviction that the rest of her life must be spent in a vain attempt to pay off his debts. Her mind revolved round the problem hopelessly.... (*I*, p. 424).

This gives a view of Miriam's middle class sensibilities; she worries that no matter what she does she cannot save her father's or indeed her family's reputation. However, her pseudo-familial life with the Corries alleviates these concerns: 'The present, within her hands, brought her, whenever she paused to consider it, to the tips of her toes', and her position in this rich, luxurious household means that 'The old troubles [...] her personal thoughts, the impossibility of living with people, poverty, disease, death in a dark corner, had moved and changed, melted and flowed away' (*I*, p. 424). Her place at Newlands

allows her a sense that the control over her situation is held in *her* hands, for a while at least.

However, even with this sense of control it is evident that Miriam feels that her social status is in constant question. For example, when she is in the company of the Corrie children she worries about how she portrays herself in front of them and how they will perceive her. Over afternoon tea with the children, Miriam struggles with the etiquette of pouring tea; trying to ‘distract the attention of the children from her fumblings with the teapot and the hot water jug’ she is aware of their social upbringing and that ‘They had certainly never met any one who did not know how to pour out tea’ (*I*, p. 362). Table etiquette was a common theme in manuals of the time; in one such manual, Florence Hartley states that:

In order to appear perfectly well-bred at table when in company, or in public, as at a hotel, you must pay attention, three times a day, to the points of table etiquette. If you neglect these little details at home and in private, they will be performed awkwardly and with an air of restraint when you are in company.¹¹

Miriam’s feeling of inadequacy in social situations is apparent as clearly the proper etiquette of tea is a skill most ladies would possess. A plethora of etiquette manuals were available from the 1840s onwards which directly instructed the governess and her employer; the sheer amount of this type of manual on the market suggests that the liminal situation of the governess was a problematic situation felt by all those involved.¹² Hughes argues this point when she comments that these manuals ‘were read by middle-class matrons looking for help on how to cope with the new and, in many ways, alarming experience of sharing their home with an employee who was neither a servant nor a family

¹¹ Florence Hartley, *The Ladies’ Book of Etiquette and Manual Politeness: A Complete Hand Book for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society* (Boston: G.W. Cottrell, 1860), p. 105.

¹² Kathryn Hughes’ study includes a wide and an invaluable array of such manuals and their influence of the workers and the mothers. See *The Victorian Governess* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993).

member'.¹³ Mrs Corrie, however, performs the role of mother-with-a-governess well and is able to overcome any hint of tension – in public at least. But, as we know, Miriam is not the first governess to work and live at Newlands: perhaps Mrs Corrie had earlier joined those ranks of middle-class women poring over their etiquette manuals to learn how one should deal with such an employee.¹⁴ As for Miriam's inadequacy in the serving of afternoon tea, it is not apparent whether the children do indeed enact such censure on Miriam or if it is just her own insecurities: either way, this highlights Miriam's own uneasiness in the constructing and performing of the "correct" identity.

Though Miriam often views the children as spoilt, especially in their treatment the servants, she can nonetheless see their innocence and how they, like her, have an upbringing over which they have no control:

To be with them after being so long with the straining, determined, openly ambitious children at Banbury Park, was a great relief ... the way they moved their heads and used their hands ... the boy's hands were wonderful, the palest fine brown silk, quick eloquent little claws, promising understanding and support. Fine little hands and steady gentle brown eyes [...] The children sat facing each other, each with clasped hands, and eyes lit with dreams (*I*, p. 363).

The view of the children here can be seen to represent Miriam's lost childhood: while in their presence she often reminisces about her own childhood and her childhood dreams. The Corrie children's upbringing is certainly more similar to her own than that of the children of the "tradesmen" whom she taught at the Perne sisters' school and she certainly takes pleasure in the former's more refined company. The description of the children's

¹³ Hughes, p. xii.

¹⁴ Early on in *Honeycomb* we are told, by Mrs Corrie, of 'Bunnikin' the previous governess who had a nervous breakdown and left the Corries employment: 'We were in an awful fix before we heard about you. Poor old Bunnikin breakin' down. She adored them – they're angels. But she hadn't the tiniest but of hold over them. Used to cry when they were naughty. *You* know. Poor old kiddies. Want them to be awfully clever. Work like a house afire. I know you're clever. P'raps you won't stay with my little heathens. Do try and stay. I can see you've got just what they want. Strong-minded, eh? I'm an imbecile. So was poor old Bunnikin. D'you like kiddies?' (*I*, pp. 358-9). The previous governess is viewed in terms of her inadequacy and the power now lies in Miriam's hands – she is seen as clearly clever and must have a strong 'hold' over the Corrie children.

hands portrays Miriam views of them, the use of ‘silk’, ‘eloquent’ and ‘fine’ suggest her perception of them is of an elevated situation and thus her approval of them follows. However, by also terming them ‘claws’ it gives some indication that, with these ‘wonderful’ hands also comes danger – danger of them inheriting the more undesirable attributes of their parents and of their social class, attributes which are so disliked by Miriam.

The sexualisation of the working woman that was seen in Munby’s material is also apparent in *Pilgrimage*. It is first touched upon in *Pointed Roofs* when Miriam is to travel to Germany to take her first teaching position: ‘mother said you’re much too attractive to go about alone, and that’s partly why pater’s going with you to Hanover, silly’ (*I*, p. 24). This hints towards a dangerous world outside of the private sphere, a world where Miriam’s naivety renders her seemingly unaware. Similarly, later in *Pilgrimage*, when Miriam is a resident of London and asserting her place in the urban sphere by taking one of her accustomed late night walks, she is mistaken for a prostitute:

She wandered slowly on humming a tune...The figure of a man in an overcoat and bowler hat loomed towards her on the narrow pathway and stopped. The man raised his hat, and his face showed smiling...Miriam had a moment’s fear; but the man’s attitude was deprecating and there was her song; it was partly her own fault...But why why . . . fierce anger at the recurrence of this kind of occurrence seized her. She wanted him out of the way and him to know how angry she was at the interruption. ‘Well,’ she snapped, coming to a standstill in the moonlit gap. ‘Oh,’ said the man a little breathlessly in a lame broken tone, ‘I thought you were going this way.’¹⁵

While trying to assert her position in the new urban domain Miriam is subjected to this, as yet, undetermined sexual sphere. So while she may be hesitant about the sexual nature of working women, she is, nonetheless, part of it. Fleetinglly she ‘partly’ blames herself but her determination to carve out her new place means that she is resolute in the fact that she

¹⁵ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage II* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1967), p. 96. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *II*.

is certainly not “going his way”. Her ambiguous sexual identity, and indeed morality, is negotiated in *Honeycomb* where she “tries out” different ways of establishing an autonomous sexual identity and this can be read through the depiction of her hands.

An area of performance involving the hand which allows Miriam to position herself away from the women of Newlands, and in a more steady position than in afternoon tea, is smoking. The public performance of smoking is an important trait of the New Woman and one which Miriam eagerly adopts; but with it comes a sense of sexualisation and by smoking one can be seen to be party to this eroticised performance. Not only does the hand play an important role in the physical activity of smoking but also in the overall display and perception of the smoker. As an activity completely dependent upon the actions of the hand, smoking can act as both a disguise – a distraction from hands which want to be hidden – and also an indicator – with the cigarette as an extension of the hand.

In the previous chapter-novel, *Backwater*, Miriam carries out her duty of rolling her father’s cigarettes, and whilst performing this requirement the question suddenly seems so obvious to her: ‘Why had she never yet smoked one?’ (*I*, p. 208). Her new rite of passage is then performed secretly on the top floor of her house¹⁶ as she smokes her first cigarette. With a sense of liberation:

She held the cigarette between two fingers. The match hissed and flared as she held it carefully below the sill, and the flame flowed towards her while she set the paper alight. Raising the cigarette to her lips she blew gently outwards, down through the tobacco. The flame twisted and went out, leaving the paper charred. She struck another match angrily, urging herself to draw, and drew little panting breaths with the cigarette well in the flame. It smoked. [...] Her nostrils breathed in smoke and, as she tasted the burnt flavour, the sweetness of the unpolluted air all around her was a new thing. The acrid tang in her nostrils intoxicated her. She drew more

¹⁶ The locations Miriam inhabits are important throughout *Pilgrimage*; for example, here Miriam is occupying the top floor which reflects a higher and elevated status, not to mention the heady effects of her first smoke. This locality is explored more later in relation to her room at the dental practice.

boldly. There was smoke in her mouth. [...] She had chosen to smoke and she was smoking, and the morning world gleamed back at her (*I*, pp. 209-10).

Smoking, therefore, becomes a confirmation of her independence which locates her firmly as a “strong” woman. As Scott McCracken argues, ‘Miriam’s first smoke is a way of throwing off the father, but the father’s absence opens up a difficult new terrain’.¹⁷ So, what was first a revolt against the patriarch, later becomes a staple characteristic of her new identity. However, with this new independent position comes gender ambiguity so what was typically associated with the male, her father, now brings about issues regarding the femininity of the smoker. A psychoanalytical interpretation of smoking, particularly a woman smoking, can relate it to Freudian penis envy; in the case of *Pilgrimage*, Miriam, through smoking, is able to metaphorically seize in her hands her father’s phallus. Therefore, in her decision to smoke Miriam locates herself more with the male than with the female and as McCracken suggests, smoking ‘allows Miriam to participate in the masculine world, but...awkwardly cuts her off from feminine solidarity’.¹⁸ As is often the case with Miriam, her determination to surpass and thus distance herself from one sex leaves her wholly and unwittingly associated with the other.

One cannot ignore the obvious Freudian interpretation, whereby the act of smoking can be viewed as an undoubtedly erotic performance; the attention of the observer is drawn to lips or perhaps more correctly drawn to the phallic object being placed to the lips and drawn upon. This erotic aspect is pertinent in terms of Miriam’s own sexual identity because for Miriam, smoking is a habit which she also finds attractive in other women. Initial stages of this desire can be seen in *Honeycomb*, when, after a shopping trip in London with Mrs Corrie, they call on Mrs Kronen in her ‘wonderful West End flat’ (*I*, p.

¹⁷ Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 61.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 64.

412) and witness her “display”. Miriam is clearly enraptured with Mrs Kronen and dizzily caught up in the intoxicating cloud of Mrs Kronen’s cigarette smoke:

The suggestion of tobacco brought the charm of the afternoon to its height. When the magic of the scented cloud drew her eyes to Mrs Kronen’s face, it was almost intolerable in its keenness. She gazed, wondering whether Mrs Kronen felt so nearly wild with happiness as she did herself....Life what are you—what is life? she almost said aloud. The face was uplifted as it had been in the photograph, but with all the colour, the firm bows of gold hair, the colour in the face and strong white pillar of neck, the eyes closed instead of staring upwards and the rather full mouth flattened and dropping with its weight into a sort of tragic shapeliness—like some martyr ... that picture by Rossetti, Beata Beatrix, thought Miriam ... perfect reality. She liked Mrs Kronen for smoking like that (*I*, p. 414).

This passage illustrates a radically different attitude from Miriam’s initial dislike of Mrs Kronen. Miriam’s aversion to Mrs Kronen is discussed when she first sees the photograph, entitled “Inspiration”. It depicts Mrs Kronen as a Grecian muse with ‘one hand limply tweak[ing] the strings of her harp’ and Miriam despises her ‘acting’ in this photograph as it is simply a performance to attract men (*I*, p. 399). Markedly in the photograph Mrs Kronen’s hand is depicted as weak, whereas in the smoking passage she is seen as ‘strong’. For Miriam, the hand can tell a vast amount about its owner: in the case of her first impression of Mrs Kronen – weak hand equals weak character. Miriam’s ever unstable gendered identity is seen in the passage about smoking: she appears to side more with the male as she explores this new sexual interest and takes the traditional male position of the observer with Mrs Kronen as the spectacle to be consumed. This new view of Mrs Kronen is an example of Miriam’s constant attraction to what is ‘real’ and Mrs Kronen epitomises it in her authentic manner of smoking. Miriam is enchanted by the ‘magic’ and ‘charm’ of the reality rather than the artifice of the photograph.

The reference to Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s work is apt to capture the realist qualities that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Miriam herself aspire towards. Interestingly, Munby was an acquaintance of Rossetti and on seeing a photograph of Hannah dressed as

a lady, Rossetti was captivated by her, so much so, that he asked to meet her: ‘This is a portrait of Her which my friend D. G. Rossetti admired so warmly, and wished for a copy of it, when he saw it in 1862 at my chambers in the Temple. “It is a beautiful face”, he said, “a remarkable face indeed; I should like to know that lady”’.¹⁹ Perhaps then, Miriam, like Munby and Rossetti, would have also appreciated the ‘realness’ of Hannah’s beauty. In this way, Miriam, like Munby, can be seen to be a theorist of the hand: they both appreciate the hand, what it tells of the owner, and find that it provides a site of eroticisation. The painting, *Beata Beatrix*, is one of Rossetti’s many pieces of work which take the subject of Dante’s great love, Beatrice. The West End drawing room becomes an enchanting place in which Mrs Kronen appears to radiate a beautiful light, similar to *Beata Beatrix*, and Miriam, with her continual haptic need, ‘drawing off her gloves, she felt as if she could touch the flowing light’ (*I*, p. 413). In the painting Beatrice’s hands are relaxed and open just as Mrs Kronen’s effortless hand waves her cigarette and ‘slurred her fingers across Miriam’s hand’ (*I*, p. 412). Significantly, Miriam tries to emulate this natural posture by removing her gloves.

Colin Cruise suggests that this painting is an example of Rossetti’s interest in ‘the unseen’, the constant angelic, the beauty, the otherworldly and the erotic impulse which is revealed often appearing as characters behind the main figures in his work.²⁰ In this painting the ‘erotic impulses revealed’ are the figures of Dante/Rossetti and Love behind Beatrice and the possibility of her rebirth. In Miriam’s vision, Mrs Kronen takes centre stage (Beatrice), the two figures behind her are Miriam’s own feminine and masculine (observer) selves. The ‘unseen’ in this image is Miriam’s possibility of rebirth into the yet

¹⁹ The diaries and letters of Arthur J. Munby 1828-1910 (Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge), 22 June 1862.

²⁰ Colin Cruise, unpublished conference paper. *Life and Works: The Contexts and Practices of Victorian Life Writing* (Keele University: 16-17th June, 2008).

un-theorised, “third gender”.²¹ The reference to Oscar Wilde in this encounter further expresses the underlying homoerotic desires of Miriam: “‘That play of *Wilde’s*...’ she said. Miriam shook at the name. “You ought not to miss it. He–has–such–*genius*.” *Wilde* ... *Wilde* ... a play in the spring – someone named Wilde. Wilde spring. That was genius’ (*I*, p. 413, original emphasis). The repeated reference to spring here can be seen to indicate that this lesbian desire is in its initial, budding stages. Joanne Winning argues that Richardson uses the figure of Wilde ‘in order to instruct a way of reading the coming articulation of lesbian desire’.²² Miriam shaking at his name offers signs of her nervousness about the potential of this ‘genius’ but she is, nonetheless, intrigued. Therefore, this smoking scene is used as a “safe” means of exploring how Miriam perceives and desires other women, with the focus resting on the act of smoking and not specifically the woman herself.²³ So, if Miriam perceives other women smoking as a spectacle, is this how she is perceived by others when she smokes?

This sexualised aspect of smoking is indeed shifted later when the positions are changed and Miriam is no longer the observer but the spectacle to be consumed. A sense of this erotic display is seen in the phallically charged scene of playing billiards with Mr Corrie and the other male guests. On this occasion, Miriam enjoys finding a quasi-public stage for challenging the traditional gender roles and indulges herself in a seductive role – one which she rarely occupies. When Mr Corrie suggests that Miriam ‘ought to learn to smoke’ (*I*, p. 435), it implies that Miriam needs to be “initiated” into the masculine sphere, thereby placing the power in Mr Corrie’s hands as it is *he* who takes the authoritative role

²¹ See Joanne Winning’s *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000) for a detailed exploration of the third gender in Richardson’s work.

²² Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p. 115.

²³ Indeed, smoking as a medium of expressing and exploring this new excitement and freedom found with women is something Miriam will continue to pursue with other women, as she later goes on to enjoy the somewhat decadent pastime of smoking with her friends, Mag and Jan.

and is able to teach *her* how to smoke. However, Miriam usurps this power when she pockets a ball, so to speak, and is able to state her self-initiation into the foray of smoking, boldly replying: 'I do smoke' (*I*, p. 436). Defying the customary position for women, 'Miriam discharged a double stream of smoke violently through her nostrils - breaking out at last a public defiance of the freemasonry of women' (*I*, p. 436). This dragon-like imagery mirrors the monstrous threat of the New Woman to the other women who are observing from their female sphere of the settees (which are situated distinctly apart from the billiard table). But it also signals the independence and strength Miriam gains in this act and the seductive position she holds in the eyes of Mr Corrie. The exchange becomes further sexualised: "It's a pleasure to see you smoke" murmured Mr Corrie, fervently, "you're the first woman I've seen smoke *con amore*" (*I*, p. 436, original emphasis). Not only does Mr Corrie flatter Miriam by saying she is unique (a quality which Miriam regards highly) but the whispering of flirtatious remarks and the use of the Italian language adds to the seductive exchange being played out between the pair. Socially, Miriam is straddling the gendered roles. By publicly smoking and positioning herself in the masculine sphere of the billiards table however, she is also being sexualised and consumed in a traditional position of female display. This dual position is one which will continually haunt her journey as she strives to find her "self" within an altering public/private sphere which seeks to dislocate her position within society.

While the billiards scene is an example of gendered roles, class implications are also evident. McCracken states how this pastime is bound up within a larger economic and social organisation:

However, the cigarette also locates Miriam within an economic system of production, consumption and exchange. While the cigarette is the means to an independent performance, it also reveals her dependence in terms of both gender and class. She aspires to the masculine role, but the role on offer comes ready

made. [...] If it is assumed that she obtains the cigarette from her employer, her dependency is revealed not just in terms of cigarettes but in her class position, selling her labour power as a “governess”.²⁴

Although Miriam may feel equal in status and intellect to Mr Corrie, her role as their governess puts her on an unequal footing. This certainly returns us to the tensions over the sexual morality of women workers, governesses especially, which Broughton and Symes discuss. While Miriam is trying to explore a new gendered subjectivity in an evolving sphere, she is not economically independent and thus relies on the monetary support of her employer. Subsequently, her flirtatious banter with Mr Corrie could suggest something more: does Mr Corrie’s buying of her service allow him other benefits? Is Mr Corrie the type of man that she has previously questioned: ‘one of *those* men who flirt with servants and shop-girls ... perhaps those awful women’? (*I*, p. 309, my emphasis). As a result, Miriam finds herself in a position in which Hannah often found herself, though to a lesser extent, that of subservience – a sexualised female servant, whose role is based on the exchange of services but also a role which allows for the possibility of a sexual exchange. Therefore, whilst attempting to exercise a new position which is apart from both sexes in a gendered/class/social status, Miriam is ultimately subject to the traditional positioning of a worker – furthermore, that of a *female* worker.

White-blouse worker

After leaving Newlands, Miriam arrives in London and acquires the proverbial “room of one’s own” in the form of a dusty attic bedroom in Mrs Bailey’s lodging house in Tansley Street. This newly attained freedom allows Miriam to enter the public sphere of urban life and move towards gaining her much desired autonomy. *The Tunnel* sees Miriam earning her pound-a-week when she takes the position of a dental secretary in a practice in

²⁴ McCracken, p. 65.

Wimpole Street, which is also the residence of the dentist Mr Orly, his wife and their son, Mr Leyton. Taking a clerical position means that Miriam is no longer “part of a family” and her mother’s suicide, at the end of *Honeycomb*, also marks a severance from a dependent position in the private sphere of family life. However, as with her governess role, in the position of a white-blouse worker Miriam is subject to the same problems of determining her social position and perception. Equally, the construction of her gendered identity is still unsteady. Gregory Anderson discusses the problematic position of the woman clerical worker when he argues that often, by their male co-workers, female clerical workers were viewed as “pin money” types and “husband hunters” and as women who had “desexed” themselves by entering a male preserve’.²⁵ The figures in comparison to those seen in governessing are startlingly different and by ‘1911 out of 117,057 female commercial clerks, 114,429 were single and 95 per cent were under the age of thirty-five’.²⁶ It is, therefore, understandable why their male counterparts viewed them as ‘husband hunters’ and as such, ‘women were usually required to resign on marriage’.²⁷ So while Miriam’s journey has progressed to the independence offered by London, her gendered and sexual identity are still in question.

Again, as with Newlands, the status of Miriam’s role as a worker in Wimpole Street is somewhat confused: she is certainly above the other servants such as the maids and men who work in the workroom as she dines with family and the other dentists but will never have their elevated status. While her employers believe she has intellect and is ‘a lit’ry young lady’²⁸ she is still an employee and will never reach the same status as the

²⁵ Gregory Anderson, *The White-blouse Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 16

²⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

²⁷ Jane E. Lewis, ‘Women clerical workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’ in Anderson, p. 33.

²⁸ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage II* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 64. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *II*.

dentists. Indeed, even her physical location at the practice suggests a liminal position. She has her own room in which to work, suggesting that she enjoys a higher status, to be sure. However, her higher status compared to other servants is perhaps only true in a physical sense as she occupies the floor above the servants and workmen who are stationed in the basement. But equally, the location of her room also shows that she is below the dentists in rank and below Mr Hancock in particular, whose surgery is situated on the top floor of the practice. Though she may gain some merit by having her own room, it is not hot like the furnace of the workroom or the surgeries with their hot running water, rather, it is cold, stuffy and uncarpeted. This room is often the source of her discomfort and her relationship to work is frequently displayed through her hands:

Her arms crept and flushed with cold at every movement, strips of cold wrist disgusted her, showing beyond her skimpy sleeves and to the hopelessness of her purplish red hands swollen and clammy with cold. Her hot head and flushed cheeks begged for fresh air. Warm rooms, with carpets and fires; an even, airy warmth. ... There were people who could be in this sort of cold and be active, with cool faces and warm hands (*II*, p. 60).

She is repulsed by her hands and almost defeated by their ‘hopelessness’. They are swollen and ruddy in complexion, the ‘purplish red’ is far from the desired soft, white, delicate hands of a lady and this appearance certainly denotes the more working class position that we have seen in the appearance of both Hannah and Wiggerson. She sets herself apart from those kinds of people, the ones who can work and still have ‘warm hands’; she is definitely not one of *those* women workers and it is another example of how she does not place herself as a worker. She contemplates how other people can put up with the tedium of this kind of work: ‘no doubt those people did best who thought of nothing during hours but the work – cheerfully – but they were always pretending’ (*II*, p. 65). However Miriam is unable to ‘pretend’ while at work as she is always in search of that elusive concept of what is “real”. In this way, Miriam’s view of her hands as dull and lacklustre is a direct reflection of how she views her work. When she takes a moment’s respite and goes to

warm her hands by the fire in the waiting room, she ‘held her hands towards the fire. They felt cold again the instant she withdrew them from the blaze’ (*II*, p. 61); the effect is momentary, indicating that it is not simply the cold which affects her hands but the work itself. Her undesirable situation is only added to by her economic situation and the resulting ineffective clothing, the ‘skimpy sleeves’ of her blouse, do little to relieve her of the cold and are yet another indication of her inability to live comfortably. This idea is seen again but a few pages later when Miriam is ‘offended at the sight of her red wrists coming out of the harsh cheap black sleeve and the fingers bloated by cold. They looked so lifeless; no one else’s hands looked so lifeless’ (*II*, p. 65). Again, the passage highlights her poor financial position as her ‘cheap’ and ‘skimpy’ clothes afford her little comfort. While she is at work she constantly views her body and in particular her hands with antipathy, stating that her hands are like ‘no one else’s’ – a perception which once again separates her from the world of working women. These hands are not the warm, confident hands she possesses at times of comfort: at work they are cold, large and ‘lifeless’ – a clear reflection of her opinion of work.

We have seen from Hannah’s work, Munby’s mysophilic desires and from how Miriam views her employment, that female work is intrinsically associated with ‘dirt’.²⁹ Perhaps then, as a way to counteract this association, Miriam washes her hands at every opportunity. Even when she is working for the Corries, she finds comfort in washing her hands but is shocked by their choice of “fashionable” soap:

The water hissed gently into a wide shallow basin, sending up a great cloud of comforting steam. Dare’s soap ... extraordinary. People like these being taken in by advertisements ... awful stuff, full of free soda, *any* transparent soap is bad for the skin, must be, in the nature of things ... makes your skin feel tight. Perhaps they only use it for their hands. ... (*I*, p. 354).

²⁹ See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002) for a wider analysis of this association.

At this point, Miriam has not been fully exposed to the display and spectacle of consumerism and advertisements; she is still influenced by her father's opinions: 'Advertisements will do anything, pater said. ...' (*I*, p. 354). Regardless of the Corrie's choice of cleansing products, Miriam is, once again, put at ease by carrying out this part of her toilet and this habit continues throughout her working life. It is seen numerous times throughout *Vol. II* and *III*: 'She might as well wash the grime from her wrists and hands'; 'Miriam went into his room and washed her hands in the corner basin'; 'She washed her face and hands in hard cold water'; 'She dressed in Mr Leyton's warm room, washing her hands in very hot water, thawing, getting warm';³⁰ 'She turned taps joyously; icy cold and steaming hot water' (*II*, p. 16; p. 54; p. 79; *III*, p. 56). This almost obsessive cleansing of her hands is used as a way to gain some distance and escape her undesired working position by both literally and metaphorically washing away the dirt and grime of work.

Disliking certain aspects of her job such as cleaning the dentists' instruments after use, as it seems demeaning, Miriam's discontent with her manual labour is portrayed through the use of her hands: 'Miriam was in her corner reluctantly handling the instruments, wet with the solution that crinkled her finger-tips and made her skin brittle and dry' (*II*, p. 40). The employment of her hands in this way results in physical damage to their condition so that their appearance is visually similar to a working class hand rather than to the former, unemployed, unblemished, middle-class hands they once were. This physical change sees a definite move towards a working-class status, more so than she ever had whilst she was a governess. However, when she is not occupied with tasks that she especially dislikes, her hands reflect a different attitude: 'free from the usual daily fatigue

³⁰ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage III* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1967), p. 49. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *III*.

of constant standing for reiterated clearances and cleansing of small sets of instruments, she swept full of cheerful strength, her mind free for method, her hands steady and deft' (*II*, p. 198). Here, her hands are strong and skilful in her tasks rather than harsh, red and sore. The change illustrates how the depiction of Miriam's hands is used to illustrate how she is feeling. This duality is a constant theme throughout *The Tunnel*, and illustrates the difficult relationship between the mundane duties of her working life and her perceived position in society – she does not “own” her working hands like Hannah.

Miriam's liminal position as a woman worker is felt strongly by her and by the other dentists at the practice; when entering the lunch-room, Mr Orly announces her arrival: 'here comes the clerical staff' (*II*, p. 167). Instantly she is socially separated from the others (the dentists and the unemployed and thus domestically situated Mrs Orly) at lunch, and her ambiguous position within the practice is further complicated when they invite her on a trip to the theatre.

She answered, stammering, in amazed consciousness of what was to follow and accepted the invitation in a flood of embarrassment. Her delight and horror and astonishment seemed to flow all over the table. Desperately she tried to gather in all her emotions behind an easy appreciative smile. She felt astonishment and dismay coming out of her hair, *swelling her hands*, making her clumsy with her knife and fork. Far away, beyond her grasp was the sense she felt she ought to have, the sense of belonging; socially. It was being offered. But something or someone was fighting it. Always, everywhere someone or something was fighting it (*II*, p. 168, my emphasis).

This poses an interesting dilemma: is this 'fighting' because of the way in which she is asked or is it down to her own uneasiness with social inclusion? On the one hand, the Orlys are offering the chance to be included at an equal level yet on the other hand, it is done in a patronising way with Mr Orly condescendingly chuckling: 'we shall have the pleasure of initiating you. Like caviare?' (*II*, p. 168). Miriam is immediately shocked and made uneasy by this offer and she is unable to conceal her feelings; once again, her body gives her away

from the tips of her fingers to the ends of her hair. Here her hands ‘swell’ with her inner thoughts and reveal her discomposure, making her clumsy and unladylike. Not only do her hands ‘come between her and the world of women’ (*I*, p. 283), they come between her and the world of social interaction. So, although she accepts the invitation to the theatre because of her lower status of ‘clerical staff’, she is unable to accept truly being part of their social circle – this is still ‘beyond her grasp’.



It is not until much later, in *Clear Horizon* that Miriam is really able to articulate her thoughts on women workers. After deciding to leave the dental practice (albeit on doctor’s orders), the practice’s current servant, Lorna, enters Miriam’s room and her presence makes Miriam aware of how servants have a cohesive and unifying presence in a house and embody the state of being rather than becoming:³¹ ‘Perhaps it is because one speaks to them directly, in language calling up the “everyday” things that hold being rather than thought’.³² Even after ten years of working at the dental practice, Miriam still views the servants as distinctly separate – ‘them’. However, she is now able to see the qualities of the woman worker and, importantly, is able to see how and why she cannot “fit” her concept of feminine consciousness with her role as a worker:

³¹ As discussed in the Introduction, this idea, imbued with gender discourse, is one which Miriam ponders throughout *Pilgrimage* and articulates in *Clear Horizon* not twenty pages before her thoughts on servants: ‘Being versus becoming. Becoming versus being. Look after the being and the becoming will look after itself? Look after the becoming and the being will look after itself? Not so certain. Therefore it is certain that becoming depends upon being. Man carries his bourne within himself and is there already, or he would not even know he exists’ (*IV*, p. 362). She tends to categorise ‘being’ as a woman’s experience and ‘becoming’ as a man’s. For further discussion of this see Bryony Randall, ‘Dailiness in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*’ in *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Jennifer Cooke, ‘Dorothy Richardson, Queer Theorist’, *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 4, (2012).

³² Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage IV* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 381. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *IV*.

But it is only to women-servants that this applies, and only to those amongst them who are aristocrats, unresentful of service because of their unconscious, mystical respect for life. Unconsciously respectful to their mysterious selves, and to others, so long as they are treated courteously, so long as there is no kind of spiritual gaucherie to shock them into administering reproof in the form of a deliberately respectful *manner*.

Wise, they are. It is much easier to understand why Wisdom, Sophia, is a feminine figure when one thinks of old-fashioned servants than when one thinks of modern women, assimilating, against time, masculine culture, and busying themselves therein and losing, in this alien land, so much more than they gain. With these bustling, companionable, 'emancipated' creatures ('no nonsense about them') men wander in a grey desert of agnosticism, secretly pining for mystery, for Gioconda. That explains the men who marry their cooks and, also, why somebody, some Latin sage, said that the only chance of equality in marriage is to marry an inferior. Meaning in culture, so that he may in one direction retain the sense of superiority without which he seems to wilt (*IV*, pp. 381-2).

These 'aristocratic' women workers are stable in their social and gendered positions; they do not search for more as Miriam does. Calling up the ancient and all-encompassing female figure of Sophia, Miriam propels the status of women workers into a higher position than they would ever achieve in reality and honours the "realness" of and the ownership of their innate femininity. However, this status is only granted to certain types of women. The 'modern woman', a position which we previously saw Miriam test out, is artificial: such women pretend and assimilate masculinity at the expense of their own femininity – there is no sense of being 'real'. This passage also highlights the negative affect such artifice has on the relationship these modern women have with men; but in doing so it troubles the fundamental inequality in male/female relationships: none receive a flattering portrait. Ultimately, Miriam is unable to assign herself to any of the current positions open to women and therefore has to search for something new, her own feminine consciousness.

Returning to the thoughts of those honoured women workers, their contentedness and her time spent as a woman worker, Miriam realises:

This sense of ease and power might have been hers all along, if she had been content to live, as so many working women whose paths had crossed her own were living all the time [...] The world these women lived in, and the passing events of their daily lives, held no deep charm, or, if charm there were, they revealed no sense of being aware of it. From time to time, in the ceaseless whirl of her days in this populous house, she had envied them their cut - and - dried employments and their half - contemptuous realism, but now, looking back, she could imagine no kind of ordered existence for which she would exchange the uncalculating years, now triumphantly finished. Perhaps a little too triumphantly to be in keeping with the whole record. For these cupboards unrepentantly full of neatly ranged, freshly-labelled bottles, these drawers of stored materials newly sorted and listed, the multitude of charts and the many accounts, not only in order, but so annotated and tabulated that her successor would relievedly find herself supplied with a course of training, were not representative of herself. They were the work of a superhumanly deedy female and could be lived up to only by an equally deedy female who, if indeed she did live up to them, would lead a dreary life (*IV*, pp. 385-6).

This shows a kind of insight that Miriam was unable to achieve when she first joined the dental practice in Wimpole Street in *The Tunnel*. Her thoughts and perceptions are now more nuanced and she is able to separate herself from those ‘old-fashioned servants’ and from those ‘emancipated creatures’ and become something new, something distinctly feminine.

Throughout the entirety of *Pilgrimage*, Miriam is at odds with her role as a worker; she finds none of the comfort or satisfaction in the employment of her hands, as is so evidently seen in Hannah’s life. Her positions as teacher, governess and clerical worker all situate her in a socially uneasy locale; in each of these roles she operates on an ambiguous and indefinable footing which problematises her ability to secure her status and identity both in terms of gender and of class. The approach of theoretical partialism reveals that while the eroticisation of Miriam’s hands is at first enjoyed (with Mr Corrie and later with other men), it soon becomes apparent that truthfully it situates her in an undesirable and uncontrollable position within the economic system of working women. It is only when the employment of her hands is turned to something she really desires and is in control of –

writing – that she is truly able to come into possession of her hands and utilise them to their full potential.

Part II

‘The broken fingernails of dirty hands’

PART II: INTRODUCTION

Part II offers a comparative study of four different authors as a way of contextualising the representation of the hand in modernist literature. It looks at Katherine Mansfield's short stories, "The Little Governess" in particular, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark*. These texts will be examined as examples of how theoretical partialism can illuminate concerns of gender, class and power in modernist literature. Also, the understanding gained in Part I of how gender and class affects one's perceived position in society allows for a more informed reading of the subsequent modernist texts in Part II. Part II follows suit with new modernist studies' pluralist approaches such as those evidenced by Haslam. Overall this thesis seeks to place Richardson firmly within the canon but it is important to acknowledge that one cannot expand the canon without transforming it in the process. This is also the reasoning behind including authors who have received less critical acknowledgement such as Mansfield and Rhys alongside the prominent modernist figures of Eliot and Joyce. So Part II works to illustrate this transformation which involves a more expansive and inclusive reading of the modernist canon. Thus the survey intentionally follows no prescribed route; it is not linear or dictated by gender, sexuality or nationality. Mansfield and Rhys provide feminine perspectives which cross genres – from short stories to novels; oceans – Mansfield hailing from New Zealand and Rhys from Dominica; and time – Mansfield's "The Little Governess" was published in 1915 and her death precedes the 1934 publishing of Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* by over a decade. Joyce and Eliot are both present in honour of the

holy trinity of male high modernism.¹ Applying theoretical partialism to the work of these “men of 1914” and the women writers illustrates that the representation of the hand crosses literary boundaries, in terms of gender, class and nationality and troubles the placement of authors in the upper echelons of modernism as they, too, depict the hand and its associated meanings.

While a seemingly disparate selection of authors there are clear modernist commonalities: they all share the modernist conception of urban space; they all detail how their characters negotiate both the public sphere – from the streets of London to those of Dublin and Germany – and the private sphere – from the personal boudoir to a bachelor’s flat; they all display the associated forms of chaos, isolation and the (sometimes unwanted) inclusion into diverse spheres of people and experiences; and they all detail how class, gender dynamics and the performativity of gender influence one’s position in society. But the nexus between these authors is their representation of the hand and my theoretical partialist approach will illuminate this connection.

Starting with Mansfield’s short stories, especially with “The Little Governess”, this section will investigate representations of the hand and its adornment, the glove, as a means of locating its centrality and highlighting its importance in a gendered reading. The themes present in this short story can be seen to be most akin to Richardson’s work where gender dynamics play an important role and becomes evident through the depiction of the characters’ hands. Perhaps, out of all the authors, Mansfield’s work problematises an overarching view of the hand – she plays with traditional representations and in some respects, her representation of the hand in “The Little Governess” can be seen as a contrary

¹ The third member of the trinity is Ezra Pound. Pound’s role in the ‘holy trinity’ will be discussed in the chapter on Eliot.

to other modernists' depiction of the hand. But rather than being an anomaly, she offers a different perspective which only goes to foreground the importance of the hand and highlight how its appearance and depiction can inform social and gender implications. Further to this, Mansfield's work firmly places *Pilgrimage* and Richardson's own depiction directly within the context of the multiplicity of the modernist representations of the hand.

The second chapter is an analysis of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and has a central focus on issues of class and gender. As Eliot's poem has already received an overwhelming amount of critical analysis, by applying a theoretical partialist approach this study seeks explore its fragmentary form in order to offer a new perspective on the "great" poem. Drawing upon the idea of the connective factor of the hand amongst people, I aim to reread the poem's characters and, importantly, reassess how the poem was understood by its readers. The autobiography of Anne Tibble, a working-class scholar, is used as a way of exploring how perceptions of high and low culture affect those works, such as *The Waste Land*, which are situated in the aggrandised locale of high modernism. Ezra Pound's influence on the poem is undeniable and as such he is also present in this chapter as it looks to the manuscripts and multiple revised drafts of the poem to provide an understanding of the hand's position in the poem. From this comes the idea of not just high modernism, but specifically *male* high modernism, a notion which, through the partial focus on the hand, this chapter aims to revisit and revise in order to explore gendered identities and the power they are afforded.

Another work which has previously received much criticism is Joyce's *Ulysses*, and again the intention of the chapter on this text is to provide a new perspective on this

modernist epic. Addressing the idea raised in ‘Circe’ of a ‘universal language of gesture’ and putting it in context of the forms of that episode – Magical Realism and theatricality – the investigation of its depiction of hands provides an understanding of what comes to be a key theme – gender dynamics. My analysis of the performativity found in *Ulysses* explores not only its gender roles but also the interplay between men and women, in terms of sexual desirability, economic factors and power. Considering three key characters in the episode I explore how Zoe illustrates the performativity of gender and sexual availability, Bella/Bello illuminates the respective power of women and men and sexual dominance, and finally how Bloom can be seen to represent the culmination of the problems of such gender performativity: the power of the sexes and the resulting unsteady gendered identity. The “mystical” hand is apparent in “Circe” and the cheiromancy session,² held by the whores, places society’s (and Joyce’s) interest in this pseudo-scientific-mystical practice to the fore. The mystical reading also offers a wider interpretation of the hand in the modernist imagination.

The previously seen fragmentation and performativity is again found in the final chapter which focuses on Rhys’ *Voyage in the Dark*. Through my reading of the representation of the hands, it becomes apparent that performance is of utmost importance to this novel, its characters and its themes. As with *Ulysses*, although this time without stage directions, a theatrical form is seen in Rhys’ novel where we are met with the leading man, the supporting actresses as well as costume department; the scenery department aptly sets the scene of the commercial and commodity driven world of London, where the boundaries between what and who is for sale are blurred. An exploration of the hands depicted in this novel also offers a new understanding of the fragmentation of the self.

² Cheiromancy is also spelled chiromancy, but will be designated as cheiromancy as this spelling is in keeping with the related nineteenth-century sources.

Focusing on the protagonist, Anna Morgan, this chapter considers her gendered and sexual identity in the context of the commodified and artificial sphere in which she finds herself. Again female agency is questioned as the women find themselves in a sexual economy dominated by the male characters and the levels of agency afforded to each of the women can be read as corresponding to their levels and adeptness in social performance.

The seemingly scattered survey of Part II is, in fact, an attempt to bring together some of the fragments of modernist literature and establish a cohesive reading of the totality of one aspect – the hand. In this sense, their unity comes from their very disparity; if four so seemingly diverse texts – short stories, poems, modern epics and novels – all depict the modernist hand in similar fashions then the hand can be seen as a commonality. Therefore, after establishing the prominence of the hand, Part II aims to lay the context for a reading of Richardson's work in Part III, highlighting that the representation of the hand is not just peculiar to Richardson and that, in fact, it is a common theme throughout modernist literature.

**‘HOW KINDLY THE OLD MAN IN THE CORNER WATCHED HER BARE
LITTLE HAND’: KATHERINE MANSFIELD’S “THE LITTLE
GOVERNESS”¹**

the little girl with her hat on one side, crying without a handkerchief, sprang on to the tram – not seeing the conductor’s eyebrows, nor hearing the *hochwohlgebildete Dame* talking her over with a scandalised friend. *She rocked herself and cried out loud and said ‘Ah, ah!’ pressing her hands to her mouth.* ‘She has been to the dentist,’ shrilled a fat old woman, too stupid to be uncharitable. ‘Na, sagen Sie ’mal, what toothache! The child hasn’t one left in her mouth.’ While the tram swung and jangled through a world full of old men with twitching knees. (LG, p. 189, my emphasis)

This is one of the last images we are given in Katherine Mansfield’s short story, “The Little Governess”.² On first reading, this offers a scene where a girl, upset and alone, is simply pressing her hand to her mouth as a gesture of horror or toothache and whose unmoderated actions in this public space cause her to be gossiped about by the other passengers. However, as Chantal Cornut-Gentile D’Arcy wisely recommends, the diligent reader ‘should be attentive to the implicit criticism which is engraved – sometimes, with the sharpness of steel – precisely “beneath the fabric” (or between the lines) of the stories’.³ In short, Mansfield’s depiction of the hand here yields insights into other contemporary social concerns. Drawing on theoretical partialism, the following chapter will focus closely on the representation of the hand and its adornment, the glove, in

¹ Katherine Mansfield, “The Little Governess” in *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Constable & Company, 1953), p. 180. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the story will be designated LG.

² Mansfield first published “The Little Governess” under her pseudonym, Matilda Berry, in the magazine *Signature*, in October 1915, where it caught the eyes of Bertrand Russell and Lytton Strachey. See Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), p. 182. “The Little Governess” was then included in *Bliss and other stories*, published in London by Constable in 1920. It met with great praise, which is said to have ignited some jealousy in Virginia Woolf, with whom Mansfield had a difficult friendship. Again, see Alpers, p. 143; p. 260; p. 317.

³ Chantal Cornut-Gentile D’Arcy, ‘Katherine Mansfield’s ‘Bliss’: ‘The Rare Fiddle’ as Emblem of the Political and Sexual Alienation of Woman’, *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (1999), 244.

Mansfield's short stories, in particular "The Little Governess", as a means of illuminating concerns of gender, class and power.

In Mansfield's short stories the hand signifies not just the owner's character, but the social setting, and the power dynamics in play. In this way, gloves, the standard manual veil for middle-class women in this period, play a key role in "The Little Governess". As Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones show, the glove can represent social status and also be a signifier of romantic exchange. Over and above its use value, for warmth or protection for the working hand, gloves have a more complex symbolic function as a form of adornment. They often worked as a means of "gentling" the hand of gentry, but also functioned as what Pietz calls "external organs of the body," organs that could be transferred from beloved to lover'.⁴ The use of gloves as superfluous accessories both foreground the hand and, at the same time, highlight its lack of utility: 'they thus materialize a paradox: they draw attention to the hands while making the hands useless, or useful only for putting on or taking off a glove, or for holding gloves or handkerchiefs or fans or flowers'.⁵ In terms of a romantic exchange, the giving or obtaining of a glove can represent the offer of oneself to the lover, so when apart the glove materialises the beloved's presence; but equally the unsolicited possession of such an item can have connotations of force or manipulation. An example of this can be seen in Mansfield's "A Dill Pickle", when the unnamed lover tries to detain his lost love by grabbing her glove:

'Don't go just for a moment,' and he caught up one of her gloves from the table and clutched at it as if that would hold her [...] she watched him draw her glove through his fingers, gently, gently, her anger really did die down, and besides, at the moment he looked more like himself of six years ago....⁶

⁴ Peter Stallybrass & Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (2001), p. 116.

⁵ Ibid, p. 118.

⁶ Katherine Mansfield, "A Dill Pickle" in *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Constable & Company, 1953), p. 173. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the story will be designated *DP*.

Not only does he ‘hold her’ in the sense of delaying her exit, as he gently strokes the glove he metaphorically strokes and placates her into staying a while longer, willing a kind of metamorphosis through possession of the object: ‘*She* was that glove that he held in his fingers...’ (*DP*, p. 174, original emphasis). However, their romance is cut short when ‘suddenly with a quick gesture he handed her back the glove’ (*DP*, p. 174). The latent power of the glove is shown here in the way it reveals how he can pick her up and put her down as he chooses, with or without her consent. Therefore, in this metonymic sense, the glove can be read as more than a mere accessory as it holds more power for both the owner and, indeed, her possessor.

For such an apparently superfluous adornment, the glove has a clear significance; indeed, it may be true to say that at a time when it was *de rigueur* to wear gloves, it carries even greater weight when one is unpaired from its mate or from the hands themselves. In this way, gloves can become fetishised and can hold a variety of forms, such as the length, material and type of the glove – from opera gloves to household rubber gloves – the identity of the wearer and what is performed either by or to the wearer. The exposing of flesh and the nakedness of the ungloved hand is also erotic when seen alongside the contrasting gloved hand. The glove itself is less of a common fetish as Valerie Steele suggests: ‘Like stockings, gloves are rarely chosen as the primary fetish object, but they are frequently incorporated into a fetish costume or fantasy’.⁷ However, they do evoke many photographic and cinematic images of the beautiful woman either slowly peeling off or gently pulling on long black gloves and, as Steele aptly puts it: it ‘does not take too Freudian an imagination’⁸ to see the sexual undertones of such an act.

⁷ Valerie Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 133.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 134.

Krafft-Ebing explores this type of fetishism in *Psychopathia Sexualis* and details the underlying psychology:

The following case of *kid-glove-fetichism* is peculiarly adapted to show the origin of fetichistic associations as well as the enormous influence permanently exercised by such an association, although itself based upon a psychico-physical and morbid predisposition.⁹

Case No. 122, of which Krafft-Ebing speaks, tells of a thirty-three year old man who had developed a glove fetish from a young age, first starting with chamois skin, then moving onto ladies' kid gloves. The description of his fetish is given in graphic detail:

They must be long, with many buttons, and if worn out, dirty and saturated with perspiration at the finger-tips, they were preferable [...] When he could shake hands with a lady gloved with kid, the contact with the soft, warm leather would cause erection and orgasm in him. Whenever he could get hold of such a glove he would at once retire to a lavatory, wrap it around his genitals and masturbate.¹⁰

Here the fetish is regardless of ownership – a woman does not have to be actively involved – the separated or worn glove both become objects of pleasure: it is the material, the signs of use and the possibility of animation (the man (Z.) sometimes stuffed ladies' gloves with wool and used the prosthetic hands to provide the necessary friction) which are erotic. This 'psychico-physical and morbid predisposition' is again solely male and echoes Freud's findings as seen in the first chapter. Women appear to have no active role in the fetish, other than being the model of the gloves/owner of the hand; they are not the fetishist themselves. Therefore, when applying this to a text, it may not be the woman wearing the gloves who is the focus, but rather the man who observes the woman wearing the gloves. While Z. is an extreme case of glove fetishism, what is shown is the power such an object can hold. This investment also highlights the perceived undesirable nature of such a fascination and of the fetishist himself, conjuring images of a sordid, secretive and obsessive man snatching women's gloves for his lascivious desires and, even if this is a

⁹ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1998), p. 182.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 182-3.

dramatic example, such a sexual fascination does usually meet general censure. So, if there is this predisposed idea of the “sordid” fetishist, what is unusual about “The Little Governess” is that it is not a simple case of the frequency of the hands depicted but of *how* they are depicted. Mansfield alters the traditional representation of the hand and glove when depicted in a sexualised context, offering the delicate hands in respectable brown suède gloves as those belonging to the villain. This is a somewhat unusual representation but, as will be shown in reference to her other stories, it is not exclusive to Mansfield as a writer but more to “The Little Governess” specifically; and this is the very reason for its place in this thesis, as it highlights the extent and the multifarious use of the hand in modernist literature.

Another of Mansfield’s short stories, “Pictures”, is an example of the representation of hands which is more consistent with the stereotypical undesirable hand. In this story, Ada Moss – an aging, out of work, contralto singer – is unable to pay her rent (an occurrence which is not uncommon for modernist female characters) but is willing to spend her money in an ABC; these spaces are often present in modernist texts and signal a public space accessible to lone women. But, as Scott McCracken argues, when Ada is dismissed by the younger, more attractive waitress, ‘the exclusion of Ada Moss [...] from an ABC signifies her exclusion from London’s new sexual economy’,¹¹ and further removes her, as an aging woman, from the opportunities afforded to those more adept in the changing times of commerce. Ada explores every option available to her, including several unsuccessful visits to casting studios where she is unsuitable for roles because they

¹¹ Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 122.

‘wanted someone young’ or ‘they had to be young and able to hop it a bit’,¹² again reaffirming her undesirability in both the sexual and economic system. Ada dreams that by entering the Café Madrid she would meet a ‘dark handsome gentleman in a fur coat’ (*P*, p. 127) who was looking to employ a contralto singer. However, the reality is quite different. A stout gentleman joins her at her table and with a ‘crooked sausage finger’ (*P*, p. 128) employs her as a prostitute rather than a contralto singer. Here the hands become sexualised instruments: Ada tantalisingly tempts the gentleman by seductively ‘drumming with her fingers on the table’ (*P*, p. 128) and his sausage finger acts as a sign of sexual exchange. These less than subtle signs at least remove the scene from the realm of straightforward sex work. Ada can still regard herself as a respectable woman asking: ‘Why shouldn’t I go to the Café de Madrid? I’m a respectable woman – I’m a contralto singer’ (*P*, p. 128). Indeed, this is not a rough man offering a street whore some money down a back alley for services rendered, but, in appearance at least, it is a more civilised affair. It is the hands that give it away. It is not the large, manly, well kept hands of the ‘dark handsome gentleman in a fur coat’ (*P*, p. 127) which sweep her off, but the stout, sausage-fingered man who likes his ladies ‘firm and well covered’ (*P*, p. 128) after whom she sails out of the café. Again, this highlights the schism whereby it is respectable hands that would offer respectable work and less than desirable hands that offer less than desirable work.

So, are the examples of the unnamed lover and the sausage-fingered gentleman the general view of the men in Mansfield stories? Malcolm Cowley’s critical review of 1921 certainly disagreed:

¹² Katherine Mansfield, “Pictures” in *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Constable & Company Limited, 1953), p. 125. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the story will be designated *P*.

Bliss is not at all a likable book [...] the disagreeable people far outnumber the sympathetic; her likable characters, indeed, are usually introduced as a foil. Most of them are men and only two or three of them receive full-length portraits. Those figures which she draws in most carefully are women; they are selfish, weak, cultured, irritable, and conceited.¹³

Cowley's review highlights the perception that Katherine Mansfield's work is focused mainly on women. But, are we sympathetic to all of the male characters? While it is true that, on the whole, the majority of female characters do receive more attention as to the detail of their character, personality and eccentricities, this does not mean, as my two examples show, that all the men are merely 'likeable' sideline figures as Cowley would have it. In fact, it is those likeable sideline characters who, on closer inspection, appear to be something completely different; one such character being the old gentleman from "The Little Governess". There is a clear demarcation between the representation of the sausage fingered gentleman whom Ada Moss meets and the old man who the governess encounters; it is this difference which makes the hands of the old gentleman from "The Little Governess" so much more complex.

Indeed, as was shown in Part I with Miriam's governessing, "The Little Governess" is not alone in early twentieth century writing. It holds its place in a tradition of narratives which touches upon the ambiguous sexual morality as well as the awkward position the governess holds in relation to class and power and returns us to what Kathryn Hughes cited as: 'the tensions which the governess seemed to embody – concerning social respectability, sexual morality and financial self-reliance'.¹⁴ These problematic power dynamics are clearly evident in "The Little Governess" as the protagonist's position as a governess gives an idea of her lower social status which is furthered by her vulnerable position as a young woman – and even more so as a young woman travelling abroad unaccompanied.

¹³ Malcolm Cowley, "Page Dr Blum!": *Bliss*, *The Dial*, 71 (September 1921), p. 365 in Jan Pilditch (ed.), *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield* (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 5.

¹⁴ Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), p.xiii.

Therefore, a useful comparison to make with Mansfield's short story is with Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and specifically the first novel-length chapter, *Pointed Roofs*, as it is of particular importance to this discussion. Richardson's text seems a natural choice to compare with "The Little Governess" as the plot itself has many parallels with *Pointed Roofs*: Miriam Henderson travels abroad to take up her position in a German school and the central unnamed character of Mansfield's story could certainly be a counterpart for Miriam. In Miriam's case, she is unaware of her 'pretty face'¹⁵ or of her vulnerable position as a young woman; in her time spent at school, playing rounders, visiting the tennis club or attending middle-class young adults' parties she had not been exposed to the wider world which would have to be faced in a solitary manner. It is only when her younger sister, Harriett, reproaches Miriam for calling herself plain and points out the reason why their father is to chaperone her, that Miriam truly starts to realise her new situation:

'Anyhow, it's no good bothering when you're plain.'

'You're *not* plain.'

Miriam looked sharply round.

'Go on, Gooby.'

'You're not. You don't know. Granny said you'll be a bonny woman, and Sarah thinks you've got the best shape face and the best complexion of any of us, and cook was simply crying her eyes out last night and said you were the light of the house with your happy, pretty face, and mother said you're much too attractive to go about alone, and that's partly why pater's going with you to Hanover, silly....You're not plain,' she gasped.¹⁶

This is when Miriam becomes aware of herself in sexual terms: 'I'm pretty'.¹⁷ This puts Miriam at an advantage, as after becoming conscious of her altered and sexualised situation in the "wider world" she will conduct herself differently and be more aware of potentially problematic circumstances. However, this is not the case for Mansfield's protagonist in "The Little Governess". Travelling alone to Germany, she is completely

¹⁵ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 24.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 23-4, original emphasis.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

fooled by, and unaware of, any underlying meaning in the seemingly chivalrous advances of the old man and finds herself in a less than desirable position – namely in the arms of her ‘fairy grandfather’ (*LG*, p. 187). This could be seen as merely a case of naivety on the governess’s behalf; but it is not that simple. Despite the governess being warned by the lady at the Governess Bureau ‘that it’s better to mistrust people at first rather than trust them, and it’s safer to suspect people of evil intentions rather than good ones....It sounds rather hard but we’ve got to be women of the world’ (*LG*, p. 175), she finds herself being lulled into a false sense of security by the kindly old man and fully trusting this relative stranger.

At the start of the story, it is clear that the governess holds a traditional binary vision of gendered hands. The women in the Ladies’ Cabin of the boat are ‘friendly and natural’ and occupy their hands with domestic activities before going to sleep, ‘taking off their boots and skirts, opening dressing-cases and arranging mysterious rustling little packages, tying their heads up in veils before lying down’ (*LG*, p. 175); yet the first impression of men presents a very different picture: ‘What a horrible man! [...] her anger, far stronger than she, ran before her and snatched the bag out of the *wretch’s hand*’ (*LG*, p. 176, my emphasis). While the women have attractive and appealing hands, here the porter is given negative connotations, not simply because he is rude and overly assertive but also because the governess is unaccustomed to dealing with men and especially with male workers in a foreign country. The porter’s disagreeable demeanour works almost contagiously making the governess become more negative as their argument over his payment continues and he throws the twenty centimes she gave him (one franc was his fare) back at her: ‘Trembling with terror she screwed herself tight, tight, and put out an icy hand and took the money – stowed it away in her hand’ (*LG*, p. 177). Their interaction is

completed when the porter ‘put his thumb nail under the label *Dames Seules* and tore it right off’ (*LG*, p. 178, original emphasis), thereby allowing the old man to take residence in the former ladies-only carriage. Therefore, with the removal of the single sex carriage, it can be seen that it is partly by the porter’s hand that the subsequent misfortunes befall the governess.

So, it comes as no surprise, given her recent interaction with other males, that, after the initial shock, the arrival of the old man and his soft suède gloves puts the governess at ease, so much so that ‘she would take off her hat and gloves’ (*LG*, p. 180) leaving herself somewhat “exposed”. As with *Pilgrimage*, it is the case that on completion of most modernist texts, “The Little Governess” being no exception, the second and subsequent readings offer a different experience. In this way, the once innocent ‘How kindly the old man in the corner watched her bare little hand’; ‘smoothing the palms of his brown suède gloves together’; and her waking to find him ‘sat in his corner, more upright than ever, his hands in the pockets’ are re-read to give a sense of the gentleman’s fetishistic tendencies and the true licentious meaning to the ‘flush that licked his cheeks and lips’ (*LG*, p. 180; p. 184; p. 181; p. 180). This licentiousness is clearly different from the gentle, ‘long white hands laid one upon the other on the crossed knees’¹⁸ of Miriam’s father, who is her travelling companion and protector. Both Miriam’s father and the old gentleman appear to possess soft gentle hands but those belonging to the old man have more predatory intentions and thus become threatening rather than protective.

While nothing in either “The Little Governess” or *Pilgrimage* is quite as graphic as Z.’s confession, it is useful to have an understanding of the fetishistic connotations

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 30.

associated with gloves when reading the texts as it can illuminate their depiction and positioning within the narrative. Not only do male gloves have different implications in both texts but also, importantly, the female protagonists view their own gloves quite differently. In *Pilgrimage*, Miriam's gloves are associated with restriction and duty. While thinking of how she must pretend to be like every other woman and enjoy church, Miriam performs this duty by 'working her fingers into their gloves and pretending to take everything for granted and to be just like everybody else';¹⁹ here the societal formalities are a chore and she must 'work' to adhere to them. Equally, moments where this formality is relaxed are noteworthy to Miriam. When the heat grows too intense in the German summer, Miriam and her pupils are granted respite from their restrictive wardrobe and on an afternoon walk in the woods, the girls 'had permission to carry their gloves'.²⁰ This release from female duty is clearly welcomed by Miriam. *Pilgrimage* also offers other representations of female gloves with Miriam's mother, who wears expensive, refined silk gloves, 'twining and untwining her silk-gloved fingers'.²¹ This depiction highlights the perceived class status, as her mother's expensive attire, air of superiority and, importantly, the performative function of the impractical adornment which Stallybrass and Jones highlight, allow her to be perceived as a lady from a higher class; a performance to which Miriam does not want to adhere.

However, the governess does not question this restrictive female duty as Miriam does; her performativity is different from Miriam's mother and is almost inherent in the way that she unthinkingly follows the customs of the time, such as wearing the correct attire. Kate Fullbrook convincingly argues that, in the later stories 'Mansfield's analysis of gender remains the central instance of her presentation of corruption, which becomes

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 70.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 152.

²¹ Ibid, p. 198.

increasingly angry and at times despairing. The characters' masks become heavier'.²² Although there is no obvious censure of the governess's performativity, Mansfield hints towards the entrenched nature of this gender-biased performance. The governess's brown kid gloves, along with her hat, 'green cape', 'motor-veil' and 'dress-basket' are all part of her costume which makes her feel at ease in her role as a worldly woman: 'I can look after myself—of course I can' (*LG*, p. 177). Fullbrook furthers Mansfield's criticism of the unequal power afforded to men and women, claiming that:

The women characters suffer most [...] they are hopeless in their seeming powerlessness, unable to assert the autonomy that would also destroy the only identities that they are certain they possess. They continue to be open to various kinds of predation by men that Katherine Mansfield habitually describes as assault.²³

This is certainly true of "The Little Governess", as the governess is often powerless either to know about or have the ability to deal with problematic interactions with men; with the old gentleman it is no different. For example, the governess acknowledges the perceived respectability of the gentleman and once she feels comfortable and reassured in the carriage with his company, she 'strip[ped] off her brown kid gloves, paired them in a tight roll and put them in the crown of the hat for safety' (*LG*, p. 180). However, the removal of her gloves appears to indicate a dangerous lowering of her defences, leaving her exposed to danger. Unbeknown to her, and in a much less overt manner than say, Rita Hayworth in the film *Gilda* or a Dita Von Teese burlesque performance,²⁴ the governess's seductive stripping off of her gloves and the contrast of her naked hands from the enclosed gloved hands, become the source of observation for the old man who enjoys watching their 'bare little' movements (*LG*, p. 180).

²² Kate Fullbrook, *Katherine Mansfield* (Sussex: The Great Harvester Press, 1986), p. 88.

²³ *Idem.*

²⁴ See Steele.

Again this highlights the power that class can afford: Miriam's mother, playing the role of the upper middle-class woman, would never be in such a vulnerable position, but the governess's weak social position is highlighted by her travelling alone. This uneasy position is furthered when the gentleman's superior financial status is made apparent as he effortlessly purchases the expensive strawberries as a gift for her and in doing so purchases her as a gift for himself: 'Timidly and charmingly her hand hovered. They were so big and juicy she had to take two bites to them – the juice ran all down her fingers [...] "Are they good?" asked the old man. "As good as they look?"' (*LG*, pp. 183-4). This scene offers a visual overload of colours, texture and movements. Her timid and charming innocence is a contrast to the, again albeit unconsciously, seductive consumption of the large strawberries which is heightened as the sticky red juice runs down her soft white fingers, inviting the observer to ponder the taste of such delights. But with the fetishistic man as the observer, it begs the question: is it the strawberries or the hands which he wishes to establish as being 'as good as they look'?

The difference in social status allows for a clear hierarchy of power and it is apparent upon leaving her at the hotel, when 'for one moment her little hand lost itself in the big brown suède ones' (*LG*, p. 185) that the old man holds the control firmly in his own hands. Indeed, those same hands and especially the accompanying gloves of the gentleman's, show a distinct change as the story progresses. At first appearing refined, clad in his smart 'brown suède' (*LG*, p. 185) gloves, the governess ponders his appearance:

How spick and span he looked for an old man. He wore a pearl pin stuck in his black tie and a ring with a dark red stone on his little finger; the tip of a white silk handkerchief showed in the pocket of his double-breasted jacket. Somehow, altogether, he was really nice to look at. (*LG*, p. 179)

The gentleman's apparel gives him an air of respectability which allows the governess to feel comfortable around him. The adornment of jewels and fine materials only goes to

reaffirm his stature as a “well-to-do” gentleman, clearly above the governess’s status. Later, when he shows her the sights of Munich, he is ‘more beautifully brushed than ever, with a rolled umbrella in one hand and yellow gloves instead of brown ones’ (*LG*, p. 185). Again, this illustrates his superior status with his extensive wardrobe in comparison to the governess’ modest attire.

However, the delightful day soon turns to something more sinister once the old man has successfully enticed the governess to return to his home; although this task isn’t too troublesome as the governess excitedly agrees to accompany him, claiming ‘I’ve never seen a bachelor’s flat in my life’ (*LG*, p. 187). The first signs of change are when the gentleman’s ‘kindly’ hands begin to shake with excitement as he pours their glasses of wine and orchestrates the final part of his plan. The location and objects of this encounter recapitulate the strawberry scene on the train: they return to his abode so that he can give her a bottle of attar of roses, they sit on a red velvet couch and he “gulps” the wine poured from the pink bottle into the pink glasses. The colours and textures all link back to the gift of the strawberries, and again his affluence is shown by giving her an expensive oil; but this time it is the gentleman who is able to consume the offerings completely. Although they have previously had physical contact (for example, the governess holding his arm under the umbrella as ‘it is the custom in Germany’ (*LG*, p. 186)) the power dynamics are different as the gentleman unnervingly forces himself closer to the governess:

the old man, turning around, so close beside her that she felt his knee twitching against hers. Before she could answer he held her hands. ‘And are you going to give me one little kiss before you go?’ he asked, drawing her closer still. (*LG*, p. 188)

The governess is stunned at the change in the ‘fairy grandfather’. She manages to struggle out of his hands but he detains her so as to bestow one of the most unsettling kisses upon her:

he held her against the wall, pressed against her his hard old body and his twitching knee, and though she shook her head from side to side, distracted, kissed her on the mouth. On the mouth! Where not a soul who wasn't a near relation had ever kissed her before.... (LG, p. 188)

This disturbing incident confirms the unexpected change in the gentleman from kindly old man to predator and highlights the acme of her lack of agency as she is unable to stop him; it also sadly emphasises her innocence as this distressing act was her first experience of a romantically intended kiss.

It is here that this section's journey comes full circle and returns afresh to the tram scene presented at the beginning. Where she had previously performed the role of a "worldly woman", after the incident her age, gender and vulnerable status are clearly highlighted: 'the little girl with her hat on one side, crying without a handkerchief, sprang on to the tram' (LG, p. 189). Her inferior social status, reaffirmed by her disjointed apparel and inappropriate behaviour in the public sphere, is then further reaffirmed by both the conductor and the '*hochwohlgebildete Dame*'. The highly educated lady, already above her in the social scale, shows clear censure as she discusses the governess's improper actions with another 'scandalised friend'. But perhaps more insulting is the conductor, a fellow worker, who, with his raised eyebrows, shows his condemnation of her conduct. The only sympathy the governess evokes is from the 'stupid' fat old woman who mistakes the governess's deportment to be a result of a visit to the dentist. The reactions of these passengers highlight the governess's unsteady position and lack of power within the public sphere. This reveals the governess's role to be in something of a liminal position – not prevailing in the public sphere yet not really part of the private sphere, as she is not part of the family but a *paid* worker.

The hands in this scene offer further illumination; after the brutal kiss the governess's mouth becomes associated with her hands as she constantly tries to protect and remove all traces of the gentleman's abuse. Her distress is also evident later when she is 'shuddering so violently that she had to hold her handkerchief up to her mouth' (*LG*, p. 189), using her hands and the handkerchief as a means of "covering up" the violated area. The hands are various in meaning: they act as a silencer (the image of putting one's index finger to their closed lips as a gesture of silence comes to mind) with the governess forcefully 'pressing her hands to her mouth' (*LG*, p. 189). This shows the urgency and importance of this silencing act so that the encounter, or more correctly, the violation is not uttered and consequently not remembered. However, the hand also works in the paradoxical way to which Stallybrass and Jones referred, acting as a silencer but also a signifier, bringing the unwanted attention to her as the passengers on the tram all cast their judgemental gaze towards her and her mouth which only destabilises any sense of control the governess might be trying to clutch onto. But, perhaps, the overall function is that they act as an eraser, a kind of remedy as the governess uses her hands to "heal" the breached site which allows her, as a young woman, to attempt to regain a sense of agency in a world full of condemnation and 'old men with twitching knees'.



While Mansfield's writing is relatively economic when compared to say, Richardson's writing, it is through her use of, as Ezra Pound would put it, 'luminous detail'²⁵ that an abundance of images, social commentary and meanings can be drawn from the mere fourteen pages. "The Little Governess" highlights how the representation of the hands

²⁵ Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), p. 21.

traces the representation and development of the characters; hands are first a signifier of status and friendliness and then move to represent the unknown predatory and comparatively naive character of their owners. They are useful as a method for reading the gender, class and power dynamics within the text and within society at the time, as it is through the hand that we can see who truly holds the dominant position and thus the power. In her depiction of the old gentleman, Mansfield offers an alternative to what is seen as the “accepted” portrayal of the sexual prowler; he becomes something both more insidious and more familiar, indeed a regular ‘fairy grandfather’. The governess’s hands start as an object of desire for an observer but then become the instruments which allow her to grasp onto some agency in her difficult role as a young governess, abroad and alone.

Reading modernist texts in this light offers an interesting approach which starts with the metonymic use of the hand, then tells us more about the text and its characters which in turn tells us more about the social relationships. Therefore, through this dismembered view we can see that Mansfield’s representation of the hand in “The Little Governess” challenges the traditional societal perception of the hand in relation to class, gender and power and posits a new, more complex interpretation. This is an interpretation which operates ‘beneath the fabric’,²⁶ through the oblique and the implicit as a means of reevaluating what the modernist hand is and more importantly what the hand of power can be.

²⁶ Cornut-Gentile D’Arcy, p. 244.

THE WASTE HAND: T. S. ELIOT'S THE WASTE LAND

I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.¹

The Waste Land is bookended with hands, from the young, frightened hands being told to 'hold on tight' to the experienced, 'controlling hands' at the close of the poem (*WL*, p. 23; p. 39). Not only do they bookend the poem, there are also scattered references to them throughout and what is significant to this section is how hands are indicative of the constructions of gender and class. A. Walton Litz's comment in 1973 that the 'position of *The Waste Land* as the central or normative statement of a new literary age was recognized from the start [...] It was part of the propaganda, as well as the crowning achievement, of the "new poetry" of 1909-1922'² is, indeed, confirmed by Ezra Pound's equally glowing statement in a letter written to Felix E. Schelling in 1922: 'Eliot's *Waste Land* is I think the justification of the "movement," of our modern experiment, since 1900'.³ Pound's overwhelming endorsement and (as will be discussed throughout) his influence on the poem, as well as on its writer, firmly places *The Waste Land* as undoubtedly part of (male) high modernism. Therefore, its position in this thesis and its distinct poetic form is an attempt to highlight how the representation of the hand pervades all elements of modernism. Also, as a means of unpicking this notion of male high modernism and exploring the representation of gendered identities and their associated power, the focus will predominantly rest on the depiction of the women in the poem.

¹ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1999), p. 34. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the poem will be designated *WL*.

² A. Walton Litz, *Eliot in His Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 4.

³ Ezra Pound, *Selected Letters 1907-1941 of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 180.

As with the other modernist texts, the idea of fragmentation and the concept of those things or forms that are “broken” are key to the whole poem and this theme can be seen to emanate from the poem wider into modernism. “The Fire Sermon” in particular is framed by this fragmented idea; it starts with the broken river’s tent and finishes with broken fingernails: even the scenery itself is evidently broken. The fragmentation can be seen to express the decline and decay of London and its inhabitants and also hints toward Eliot’s own illness at the time, as he was convalescing in Margate during the time of writing “The Fire Sermon”. Clearly, this use of the ‘broken’ is evident in the poem as a whole and not just “The Fire Sermon”: the fragmented nature of the five sections and the snapshots of different characters all convey separation and isolation as well as conflicting multiplicity and diversity. In this way, the whole of the poem is prophesied in the second stanza of “The Burial of the Dead” which offers: ‘A heap of broken images’ (*WL*, p. 23). Thematically the fragments are linked by the ‘Unreal City’ of London and guided by Tiresias who, as Eliot states in his “Notes”, is ‘the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest’ (*WL*, p. 42). However, these are not simply arbitrary images; a lack of connection is overwhelmingly felt throughout the poem and experienced by the characters. Concomitantly, a sense of interconnectivity is seen throughout the different sections and indeed through the merging of the characters.

Locating the protagonist of this poem is a somewhat difficult task as the multiple characters/speakers/narrators merge into one another; Eliot himself claims in the “Notes” that ‘Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from the Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman’ (*WL*, p. 42). This allows for a notion of a shared gender within a character – a form of continuity but at the same time a sense of its contradictoriness – and its continual

fluctuating throughout the poem. It also allows for the individual identities of working masses to merge, to become one entity. Whilst Eliot and other dominant modernist figures such as Joyce and Pound celebrate mythological characters and find the hero in the everyday man and the epic in the everyday, concomitantly, a disparaging view of proletarian culture can be found in *The Waste Land*. Far from the positive aestheticising and the eroticising of working women's hands that we have seen from Munby, Eliot opts for a more gritty depiction and pays no reverence to those hard hands which come to be symbolic of the faceless working masses. But, this can be problematic for the readership's identification with the poem as there is no obviously heroic character, such as we find in *Ulysses* with Bloom and his 'new Bloomusalem'.⁴ Wayne Koestenbaum discusses the apparent phallocentricity of *The Waste Land*'s collaborative nature as well as its contemporary readership: 'Despite its sibylline discontinuities, *The Waste Land* was used to shore up that monolith, the male modernist. [...] Critics have patiently sought a male protagonist in the poem, and identified this quest figure with the male reader'.⁵ Listing several critics who locate Eliot and his protagonist as an 'international hero' and 'both hero and king'.⁶ Koestenbaum places the poem in a masculine realm and argues that it created 'a brotherhood of critics'.⁷ Yet this 'brotherhood' has since faded into a more gender-ambiguous reading which sees no prominent 'male' protagonist.

With regard to the question of readership, Amy Hume suggests that the absence of a definitive protagonist is relevant as, in fact, the hero can be the reader:

⁴ James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 457.

⁵ Wayne Koestenbaum, 'The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Collaboration on Hysteria', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1988), p. 112.

⁶ Koestenbaum usefully draws on contemporary criticism such as: I. A. Richards, 'The Poetry of T. S. Eliot', Delmore Schwartz, 'T. S. Eliot as International Hero' and John Crowe Ransom, 'Gerontion' all found in Jay Martin, ed., *A Collection of Critical Essays on "The Waste Land"* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), as a way of contextualising the dominant masculine discourse of the poem. It is worth mentioning that Koestenbaum himself does not adopt this phallocentric stance.

⁷ Ibid, p. 113.

Many readers overlook the role of the hero because they are used to reading about the hero's actions on the page. The female or male hero of this poem, however, potentially is a reader who actively engages with the poem, though she or he is not physically a character on its printed pages.⁸

For Hume, the reader does not simply absorb the words from the page, but plays an active role in defining their meaning.⁹ Hume also argues that Eliot offers a 'modern' hero through this use of collaborative literature in which the dutiful reader engages with the text and plays an active role:

Eliot defines what it means to be a modern hero in three different phases of the poem: the first refers to Eliot's use of the second person in "The Burial of the Dead," which invites readers into the poem, yells at them, and then begins to lead them on a journey; the second places readers in the role of the active spectator; and the third phase of reader's interaction with the text consummates their role as the hero by becoming an active participant, a collaborator, who affects and alters the poem's essential meaning.¹⁰

Readerly collaboration, of course, is a double-edged sword. Whilst engaging critical energy, it can also, in this instance, occasion strong class-based opposition and distinctly affect the 'poem's essential meaning'. A pertinent example of this can be seen in Anne Tibble's autobiography *One Woman's Story*. Tibble, a daughter of a working-class family from Yorkshire, gained a university scholarship. During her time at university she was exposed to the 'great' poets such as Wordsworth and Eliot. Whilst she found Wordsworth to be awe inspiring, her first reading of *The Waste Land* provoked a reaction which was quite the contrary:

What stood out was that T.S. Eliot's outlook was almost utterly invalid. I could even call it evil. ... I didn't care whether *The Waste Land* was an oriental, unsentimental poem taking hope as psycho-neurosis. I only knew that it was utterly without feelings for others, therefore invalid. Eliot showed people as ugly, stupid, shabby, vulgarian, squalid, somehow indecent. But people such as some of those in

⁸ Amy Hume, 'Listening for the "Sound of Water over a Rock"', *Yeats Eliot Review*, Vol. 23, No. 3/4 (2006), p. 3.

⁹ This collaborative concept is supported by Virginia Woolf in her essay 'How One Should Read a Book'; amongst her many recommendations she states, 'Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice' and in doing so you are able to 'gain the fullest possible value from what you read.' (Virginia Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?' in *The Common Reader: Second Series* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1948), p. 259).

¹⁰ Hume, p. 3.

The Waste Land I had been looking at all my life: the ‘broken fingernails of dirty hands’ was meant to repel, to startle readers into seeing working people as rats – slimy, mean, ugly. That he swayed so many means that Eliot, in Pope [sic] tradition of intellect, was an original, a great poet. To achieve such persuasion means that at the time he wrote it he was a sick and desperate individual. Weren’t these my father’s and my mother’s hands? Hands therefore of so many like them. *The Waste Land* marked the beginning of an era of cynicism and disillusion under which we still labour.¹¹

Clearly this physical depiction of the ‘working’ hand struck home with Tibble as she recalled those hands of her family and, perhaps, signalled towards the hands she herself would have possessed had she not gained a university scholarship. Her own strong reaction is as gritty and graphic as Eliot’s: the overload of negative adjectives (shabby, vulgarian, slimy, mean, ugly) which she construed from the poem certainly goes to show the extent of her dismay and highlights how she perceives Eliot’s disregard for the individual within the mass. The fact that this image of ‘broken fingernails’ was not a shock to Tibble, that she had been surrounded by them all her life, in her opinion negates Eliot’s efforts to startle the reader and in fact turns the spotlight from the working masses onto Eliot himself and his apparent misconception. Tibble refers to these lines in “The Fire Sermon”:

On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
My humble people who expect
Nothing. (*WL*, p. 34)

These broken fingernails register the hopelessness of a people who expect nothing and will, inevitably, reach ‘Nothing’. More important is the lack of connection: they are adrift from relations between themselves and, indeed, from the wider reaches of society, both part of a mass – ‘My humble people’ – and of ‘Nothing’. It is therefore easy to understand the readership exemplified by Tibble’s reaction; the devalued and faceless representation of the ‘humble people’ with whom she had grown up does not, in her opinion, offer a true

¹¹ Anne Tibble, *One Woman’s Story* (London: Peter Owen, 1976), pp. 28-29.

depiction but unfortunately, or indeed ironically, this vehement reaction only goes to distance herself from Eliot's poem and thus reaffirm his point. This kind of readership certainly problematises *The Waste Land* as either being read as the work of a 'great' poet or as simply the work of an elitist artist. Therefore, a pertinent question to ask is: is it a problem with the poem or with the reader? Does Tibble's distinctive background and experiences prevent her from engaging with such a poem or does the poem not allow such a person to be engaged?¹² Perhaps the issue here is one of identification: with the poem, with the characters and with the hero.

Tibble is an unwilling reader who does not wish to engage with those opinions with which she disagrees; however, her engagement here consists in the simple fact of her rejection of the poem. Tibble wishes to see heroic action, but in the absence of the heroic she turns to life, and that of the working classes in particular, to identify (and identify with) the heroic:

What in that city struck home for good was that few lives, even of the outwardly squalid or dull, escape, if only in the odds they face, a faint but unmistakable touch of the heroic. Doesn't it approach the heroic to endure, with overall hope and good humour, the sheer filthy toil, ugliness, unidentified disease and mistakes that still make so much of life for so many?¹³

Here Tibble shifts the view of the masses as vulgarian to that of the heroic; it is the very dirtiness of their lives and their determination which makes them even more heroic to her. Tibble's position was quite unusual in the late 1920s: women had only recently been allowed to attend university and even though she experienced the hitherto unknown terrain of university life, she kept her working-class roots close to her. Tibble's strong views on class and gender therefore shape her (mis)interpretation of the poem; her involvement with

¹² Indeed, as Woolf states: 'These are the questions that press upon us when we read lives and letters, and we must answer them for ourselves, for nothing can be more fatal than to be guided by the preferences of others in matters so personal.' (Woolf, p. 263).

¹³ Tibble, p. 17.

her own views of the outside world affects her engagement with and reception of the poem and its internal workings. For her anti-elitist approach, the ‘broken fingernails of dirty hands’ are her world and her heroes and not merely a device used to ‘startle’ and seemingly express condescending opinions. But by virtue of her strong engagement with the poem, albeit a negative one, in Hume’s sense she does, in fact, become its inadvertent hero.

If, as Tibble sees it, Eliot is ‘utterly without feelings for others’¹⁴ and the working-class becomes an amorphous mass, what does this mean for gendered identities? Indeed, the fact that ‘all the women are one woman’ (*WL*, p. 42) certainly problematises a clear construction of femininity. Quite contrary to Mansfield’s apparently gynocentric work, while we are given glimpses of various women in Eliot’s poem, none are fully portrayed. “A Game of Chess” is the predominant section on women, offering a cross-section of the high born (Belladonna/Cleopatra), the neurotic middle-class, and working class (Lil, Lou and May). Ironically, the reference to ‘sweet ladies’ (*WL*, p. 29) used at the close of the section only goes to highlight the rather soured view of the women from these different classes. The Belladonna figure who opens “A Game of Chess” is seen resplendent amongst her elaborate display of material possessions:

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion.
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powered, or liquid – troubled, confused

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 28.

And drowned the sense in odours. (*WL*, p. 26)

Surrounded by her ‘jewels’ and ‘burnished throne’ she, and the construction of her femininity, becomes an artifice: her contrived perfumes only serve to make the atmosphere ‘troubled, confused/And drowned the sense in odours’ (*WL*, p. 26), leaving the reader/narrator bewildered. So while this construction of self and surroundings serve to bewitch the observer, the abundance of her possessions also draws the focus away from herself specifically – she is never seen but is an image along with her possessions, depicted/distorted in the reflection of her glass. Discussing Belladonna as a ‘Cleopatra surrogate’, John P. McCombe argues that Cleopatra herself is seen as a ‘problem woman’:

Much like Eliot’s numerous other female characters with whom the Egyptian queen is compared, Cleopatra is a problem insofar as she is artificial, even inanimate, and she represents the antithesis of the ‘life’ and ‘rebirth’ that are so central to Eliot’s poetics. [...] the Cleopatra figure is embedded in a discourse that recognizes her as an object of desire, but one which can be contained through discourse. Through representation, it is possible to ‘know’ her and thus diminish her power.¹⁵

In terms of the power afforded to the feminine ‘object of desire’, by detailing the overwhelming array of items which surround Belladonna, Eliot’s representation does indeed work to ‘diminish her power’ of femininity; in fact, it is the artifice and ‘synthetic’ nature of her very surroundings which diffuse her status and render her as merely another item on the dressing table.

This portrayal of the Belladonna figure also, as McCombe suggests, represents the threat of the ‘dangerous woman’ with ‘a devouring sexuality’,¹⁶ and this idea can be seen to continue in the depiction of the neurotic middle-class woman. However, the middle-class woman offers a slightly different perspective – while a ‘devouring sexuality’ can be seen to be evident, it is more a case of sexual connection (consenting or otherwise)

¹⁵ John P. McCombe, ‘Cleopatra and her Problems: T. S. Eliot and the Fetishization of Shakespeare’s Queen of the Nile’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2008), p. 24.

¹⁶ *Idem*.

unachieved. Drawing on various theories of gender construction and the work of Judith Butler in particular,¹⁷ Cyrena Pondrom extends the idea of gender performativity to *The Waste Land* suggesting that, perhaps, it is the male characters who fail to perform to the accepted gender standards.¹⁸ Again this concept draws upon the notion of the reader's interaction with the poem; while we are given specifically gendered characters such as the middle-class woman, the narrator is usually left ungendered: 'This narrative produces what it presupposes; we presume the narrator in this poem is male because he "acts male". Thus with the collaboration of the reader, the narrator performs a failed masculinity'.¹⁹ Pondrom explores this idea with reference to the middle section of "A Game of Chess" and the conversation where the male character is unable to satisfy the female speaker either mentally or sexually. The first dialogue in this section offers the portrayal of a neurotic middle-class woman who is retiring to bed and the person to whom she is speaking is, presumably, her husband or lover. Her agitated state renders her unable to have any connection, sexual or otherwise, with her partner who is equally unable to satisfy her: 'Words fail; the mind of this man is completely opaque to her, and identification of the perceiving subject with the desired object is literally non-existent'.²⁰ Flitting from one point to another – 'hot water at ten', 'a closed car at four', 'and shall we play a game of chess?' (*WL*, pp. 27-8) – the speaker's hysterical thoughts and words continue the fragmented style of the poem and illustrate her own disjointed temperament. Equations with Vivienne Eliot and her own mental instability have naturally been made by critics of Eliot.²¹ While this should not be discounted completely (there is much evidence of the

¹⁷ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁸ Cyrena Pondrom, 'Performativity of Gender in *The Waste Land*', *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2005), pp. 425-441.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 429.

²⁰ Pondrom, p. 432.

²¹ See Richard Ellmann, 'The First *Waste Land*' in A. Walton Litz, ed., *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Hugh Kenner, 'The Urban Apocalypse' in A. Walton Litz (ed), *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the*

collaboration between Eliot and his first wife during the time of the poem's creation),²² I propose that the overly neurotic portrayal of the speaker negates the idea of a purely male (or Eliot's) inadequacy since the woman's neurosis appears to render her utterly unable to be satisfied. This section acts as another representation of failed love and failed interaction between the male and female. So, while Pondrom's argument is credible (the narrator does indeed fail in "his" performance of masculinity) it is also true to say that the woman's inconsistency means that it would be difficult for either party to succeed in such a situation.

The final women portrayed in "A Game of Chess" are equally flawed, perhaps even more so than has been seen previously. Physically and aesthetically inadequate, the women talk of how Lil could resolve her problem and make her more desirable to her husband: 'Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart./He'll want to know what you done with that money he/gave you/To get yourself some teeth' (*WL*, p. 28). This time it is teeth instead of hands which are the body parts to cause such disgust and neither Albert nor the speaker can 'bear to' look at her. Eliot puts colloquial language in the mouths of these women to highlight their status. The women appear to be inadequate in many respects; the speaker believes that Albert's potential infidelity will only be as a result of Lil's inaction: 'he wants a good time,/And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said' (*WL*, p. 28). So if Lil is unable to be sexually attractive to her husband she must resort to artifice to snare him once more and keep his gaze away from other women. Unable to perform the norms of female attractiveness, Lil is uninterested in attracting her husband as it results in one thing – procreation, 'She's had five already, and nearly died of young/George' (*WL*, p.

Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Cyrena Pondrom, 'Performativity of Gender in *The Waste Land*', *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Sep 2005), pp. 425-441.

²² In fact, Vivien was pleased with this section of *The Waste Land*, marking it as 'WONDERFUL' and 'She relished the presentation of her symptoms broken metre.' (Valerie Eliot, p. 11; Ellmann, p. 60).

28). This, once again, offers a negative view of the woman who is construed as less than adequate in the performance of gender, in this case unwilling in the role of lover and mother.

All three accounts of women rest on constructed and contrived images, from the wealth of possessions to aesthetic trickery. Certainly none of these women offer any satisfactory sexual experience: from Philomel's²³ encounter with King Tereus who 'So rudely forced' (*WL*, p. 26), an account of rape and Philomela's metamorphosis into the nightingale,²⁴ to the lack of connection between the couple in the middle section, and finally, culminating in the last section with the line, 'What you get married for if you don't want children?' (*WL*, p. 29). Although the first section refers to a serious act of sexual violation – the rape of Philomela – it appears that the majority of Eliot's references to mythology and past civilisations are gilded with a sense of beauty and magnitude while his references to contemporary society (i.e. Lil's relationship with her husband) are marred with decay as the women are left looking 'antique'. Indeed, if McCombe is correct in saying that life and rebirth are at the centre of Eliot's work then the abortive nature of interaction with these women only goes to show his discomfort with societal decline and greater democratisation.

²³ Eliot used the name Philomel in the poem even though she is known as Philomela in the conventional myth and referred to as such in Eliot's own notes. Therefore, I shall only use Philomel when referring directly to the poem.

²⁴ This refers to the Greek myth of King Tereus of Thrace, his wife Procne and her sister, Philomela. King Tereus raped his wife's sister then imprisoned her and cut out her tongue to prevent her from telling of the crime to her sister. The myth becomes more horrific when, through the weaving of a tapestry, Philomela informs Procne of the crime, and for vengeance Procne kills her own son, Itys and feeds him to his father, Tereus. Upon discovery of this trickery, Tereus chases the two sisters but before he could kill them, all three are transformed into birds: Tereus to a hoopoe, Procne to a swallow and Philomela to a nightingale, hence her presence in *The Waste Land*. This sense of violation of the female body and the inability to communicate can clearly be seen in *The Waste Land*. For the full story see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book IV, translated by Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

This kind of portrayal of women is not simply confined to “A Game of Chess” but is also continued in “The Fire Sermon”. This section in particular gives a sense of bleakness, not only in the desolate setting of the Thames but also in the interaction, or lack thereof, of those characters present. David Craig echoes this sentiment and remarks that the poem creates and feeds off a general sense of disillusionment. With reference to the typist, Craig argues, ‘the pub women and the typist have been made so utterly sour and unlovely that the poet’s innuendo, being unnecessary, does no more than hint at his own superior qualities’.²⁵ As Craig suggests, not only does Eliot portray the women as both apathetic in their characters and repulsive in themselves, but the poem highlights his own superiority over these women. Class is important here; discussing similarities which transgress the traditional boundaries between the higher class women and those ‘pub women’, Craig states:

But life is fruitless here too, and the poet’s aloof revulsion is conveyed by similar means. The working-class women in the pub talk about false teeth, abortions, promiscuous sexual rivalry between the wives of Great War soldiers, in a lingo which sprawls over any kind of formal elegance of metre or rhyme.²⁶

So, while the overtone is that of despondency and detachment, what Craig argues (in a tone almost on a par with Tibble’s vehemence)²⁷ is that a strong elitist undertone can be seen throughout the poem, which is, perhaps, what prompted Tibble’s reaction.

²⁵ David Craig, ‘The Defeatism of *The Waste Land*’ in *Storm over The Waste Land* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1964), p. 125.

²⁶ Ibid, 124.

²⁷ This tone is seen especially in Craig’s reading of the clerk – ‘the young man carbuncular’ – in *The Waste Land* (WL, p. 32): ‘When we come to “carbuncular” – an adjective which, placed after the noun and resounding in its slow movement and almost ornamental air, is deliberately out of key with the commonplace life around it – I think we begin to feel that Eliot’s conscious literariness is working, whatever his intention, more to hold at arm’s length something which he personally shudders at than to convey a poised criticism of behaviour. There is a shudder in ‘carbuncular’; it is disdainful, but the dislike is disproportionately strong for its object; queasy emotions of the writer’s seem to be at work. The snobbery is of a piece of this. “He is a nobody – a mere clerk, and clerk to a *small* house agent at that. What right has *he* to look assured?”’ (Craig, p. 127, original emphasis).

As Craig suggests, the women are portrayed in a less than desirable manner, which is also evident in the portrayal of their hands. For example, in “The Fire Sermon” an active/passive dichotomy is evident in the male/female characters. The clerk is given active ‘exploring’ hands and while they meet ‘no defence’ from the passive typist they continue in their quest until they, at last, ‘grope’ their way out of the tryst (*WL*, p. 32). However, here the typist’s hands are portrayed in a rather mechanical fashion: contrary to the clerk’s active hands, hers are relatively passive as she monotonously cleans and prepares her living quarters in anticipation of the meeting. After the encounter with the clerk and ‘hardly aware of her departed lover’ her indifference is continued:

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
‘Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.’
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone. (*WL*, p. 32)

This scene echoes the female figures found in “A Game of Chess”, but the typist is surrounded by less luxurious items than Belladonna: ‘clears her breakfast, lights/Her stove, and lays out food in tins [...] On the divan are piled (at night her bed)/Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays’ (*WL*, p. 31). Like Belladonna sitting before her ‘glass’ and later with ‘Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair’ (*WL*, pp. 26-7) this gives a communal sense of the performative nature of the construction of femininity and of sexual (non)union, as in all cases the woman’s physical appearance is checked/observed in a mirror. However, it also works to further the separation and disconnection with such acts as the women are not seen fully but are merely a reflection, and thus a distanced and removed view, of themselves. Whilst the scene with the typist and the clerk is sometimes read as rape, I propose that it is more a scene which highlights the lack of “connection” in sexual activity, a type of sterilised female sexuality. The typist feels no passion or lust and equally no

disgust or sense of violation which would be brought about by rape: she merely states “‘Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over’” (*WL*, p. 32). The act is seen as a duty, a chore, and is regarded with indifference.

Indeed her relation to her own body is seen to be perfunctory when she simply ‘smoothes her hair with automatic hand’ (*WL*, p. 32). The mechanical correlation of the typist is furthered as she ‘puts a record on the gramophone’ (*WL*, p. 32) which acts to extend her connection with the machine and removes her further from human, or indeed masculine, activeness. Just as the working hand acts as a *pars pro toto* for the individual, indeed her very occupation as a typist offers her as an extension of the machine; the end of her work day sees her as a ‘human engine’ (*WL*, p. 321), a part of the new collective mass of women working in the faceless clerical roles in the city, only to return home to continue her “mechanical tasks”. This type of inadequate sexual encounter is seen throughout the whole poem and is experienced later in “The Fire Sermon”:

[...] Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.’

‘My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised “a new start”.
I made no comment. What should I resent?’ (*WL*, pp. 33-4)

Again this both echoes a despondency with the ‘event’ and also what Pound would deem a failed masculinity: ‘He wept’. The woman is, once again, physically and mentally disconnected: ‘I made no comment. What should I resent?’

The original drafts of the poem are particularly noteworthy as the section which refers to the ‘dirty’ hands and angered Tibble, is significantly different. It is due to Pound’s

immense editorial role that the poem's "essential meaning" drastically changes from its first incarnation to its final version. The first draft, later crossed out, reads:

‘I was to be grateful. On Margate sands
There were many others. I can connect
Nothing with nothing. He had
I still feel the pressure of dirty hand.’²⁸

This completely alters the representation of the hand: in this earlier version much of the later separation and disconnection is absent and a more personal account is given as well as a sense of belonging – ‘There were many others’. By using the personal pronoun in the final sentence to physically connect the speaker with the hand itself, Eliot offers a more haptic interpretation of the hand rather than an abstract description. The focus is on the personal: the pressure of the ‘dirty hand’ is felt to have social as well as sexual connotations. When read as a sexual reference the dirty hand can be understood as another negative image of sexual encounters: the pressure could either be physical or forceful in nature but both are enacted by a less than desirable hand. Equally with a social reading, this pressure could have dual meanings and be read, if we are to follow the train of thought of the final poem, as the pressure of the people from whom the speaker originates – the working-class, or as pressure from the more elitist stratum of society by being associated with the working-class. In any of the above readings, all sense of agency is taken away from the speaker whose feelings are dictated by external, rather than internal, perceptions.

This stanza is also contradictory; the four personal pronouns, especially the mention of ‘he’, the feelings of gratefulness and of pressure and the ‘many others’ all jar with the inability to connect but it is this sense of separation which, as we know, is the tone the final draft takes. So why did Eliot or, perhaps more correctly, Pound move away from

²⁸ Valerie Eliot, ed., *The Waste Land: a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), pp. 52-53.

this more character-based stance when it is seen elsewhere in the poem? The next incarnation of the stanza reads:

~~‘I was to be grateful. On Margate sands~~
~~There were many others. I can connect~~
~~Nothing with nothing. He had~~
 I still feel the pressure of dirty hand.’²⁹

From this it is clear that the “personal” is no longer required in the scheme and it starts to be removed. Pound’s extensive editorial remarks on the whole of “The Fire Sermon” do indeed remove such unnecessary information and details and make the final version more definite. Ronald Bush argues that ‘Pound set to work with the same bag of surgical instruments’ that he had used on Eliot’s earlier poems and ‘Out went inappropriate detail, weak verbs, inversions, extraneous adjectives’.³⁰ Eliot’s changing and swaying tone in the earlier versions is soon expelled with Pound’s often harsh comments: ‘make up yr. mind you Tiresias if you know know damn well or else you dont’.³¹ This strong editorial influence also means that, perhaps, Tibble’s anger was wrongly directed at Eliot when, in reality, her target should have been the more elitist Pound. Eliot’s previous insight into the personal feelings in the Margate stanza allows one to relate more to the ‘ugly’ and ‘vulgar’ people who possess such hands and thus Pound’s removal allows for a greater sense of disconnection. Therefore, it serves the poem’s sense of despondency well if, in the final version, the solitary ‘I’ is apart from all.

We are given another example of the working hand in an original part of “The Fire Sermon” which was cut from the final version:

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound’s CANTOS* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 235.

³¹ Valerie Eliot, p. 47.

The white-armed Fresca blinks, and yawns, and gapes,
 Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes.
 Electric summons of the busy bell
 Brings brisk Amanda to destroy the spell;
 With coarsened hand, and hard plebeian tread,³²

Here the mythical white arms (reminiscent of a Homeric depiction of women, such as Nausicaa) which belong to Eliot's Fresca are contrasted with the ruddy, coarse working-class hands of the servant, Amanda. Not only does the physical depiction of Amanda's hands and gait make her seem less than desirable but her physical presence ruins the dreamy environment that Fresca inhabits. The contrasts are also furthered in the character of Fresca, who is seen both in a mythical light (white-armed) and in a very corporeal, bodily light as the following stanza depicts her defecating. Discussing Pound's editorial influence, Richard Ellmann argues that: 'Instead of making her toilet like Pope's Belinda, Fresca is going to it, like Joyce's Bloom. Pound warned Eliot that since Pope had done the couplets better, and Joyce the defecation, there was no point in another round'.³³ Indeed, it is not a far leap to see comparisons with Eliot's 'white-armed Fresca' and the 'white-arm' of Molly Bloom,³⁴ especially in the bodily orientated final line: 'Disguise the good old female stench/ hearty female stench'.³⁵ Although never part of the final version of *The Waste Land*, reference to Fresca is found in Eliot's earlier poem "Gerontion". Eliot originally considered using this poem as a prelude to *The Waste Land* but was, once again, advised against it by Pound: 'I do *not* advise printing *Gerontion* as a preface. One don't miss it *at all* as the thing now stands. To be more lucid still, let me say that I advise you NOT to print *Gerontion* as prelude'.³⁶ However, the presence of Amanda in this cancelled

³² Idem, p. 23.

³³ Richard Ellmann, 'The First *Waste Land*' in A. Walton Litz (ed), *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 54.

³⁴ Joyce, p. 216.

³⁵ Valerie Eliot, p. 23.

³⁶ *TWLC* in Valerie Eliot, pp. 127.

section does continue the fragments of Eliot's depiction of the unattractive appearance of working-class hands which are seen throughout *The Waste Land*.



As fragmentation is key to this poem's interconnectivity, in this manner, other links and echoes become apparent; just as the journey from the young frightened hands 'holding on' to 'the hand expert' (*WL*, p. 39) so too, are the 'dirty hands' and concept of 'nothing' (as explored in "The Fire Sermon") a recapitulation of "A Game of Chess" seen in the 'dirty ears'; 'I knew nothing' and

Nothing again nothing.
'Do
 'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you
 remember
 'Nothing?' (*WL*, p. 26; p. 24; p. 27)

This layering adds to the decay, nothingness and the conflicting sense of disconnection whilst simultaneously being connected. This culminates in "What the Thunder Said" with 'a broken Coriolanus',³⁷ the broken view of London Bridge falling down, a return to Philomela, '*Quando fiam uti chelidon*', and the crucial line: 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins' (*WL*, p. 39). A further echo of this line is seen in Pound's *Canto* viii: 'These fragments you have shelved (shored)'.³⁸ Eliot discusses this reference in a letter to Peter Russell:

of course Mr Pound saw the manuscript of *The Waste Land* immediately on its completion and my lines certainly occurred in the draft which he saw in, I think, the month of January 1922. While I made some revisions and chiefly a great many excisions as a result of Pound's criticism of this draft, the final section of the poem remained exactly as I first wrote it. I should think also that his putting the word

³⁷ This links with Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and Eliot's own preference for this tragedy over Hamlet. But it also links with the idea of exile and isolation.

³⁸ Ezra Pound, *Cantos* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), p. 32.

‘shored’ in brackets at the end would indicate a deliberate reference to *The Waste Land* which the reader was intended to appreciate.³⁹

This further establishes a sense of interconnectivity not just within the poem itself but also extending out to those involved in the gestation of *The Waste Land* and modernism itself.

³⁹ Quoted in Valerie Eliot, p. 129.

THE MYSTICAL HAND: JAMES JOYCE'S ULYSSES

‘So that gesture, not music not odours, would be a universal language’¹

With “Circe” setting the stage where the universal language is that of gesture, hands become especially instrumental in generating nonverbal meaning. Employing the approach of theoretical partialism will help to illuminate their role. *Ulysses*, as one would expect, offers a multitude of textual/sexual references to the hand; but for the purposes of this section, two areas in “Circe”, which look at gender dynamics and how they are altered in what can be seen as a typical Joycean manner, will be explored. The first is Bloom’s interaction with the prostitute, Zoe and the second is his encounter with the infamous Bella/Bello. The form of “Circe” is also important in understanding the representation of the hands; this section will look at how Magical Realism and theatrics can illuminate the role of the hands and nonverbal communication between the characters. This chapter will also consider the role of the “mystical hand”, drawing on the popular trend of cheiromancy and its place in “Circe”, and exploring the power that is invested in (and on) one’s hands.²

Gerald Martin places Joyce as something of a forefather of the Latin American Magical Realist genre and classifies Joyce’s literary legacy into seven ‘deadly virtues’ – 1: ‘the structural incorporation of myth – public or private – into the novel’; 2: ‘the exploration of language through and in fiction’; 3: exploration of nature and consciousness; 4: ‘obsessive quest for totality’ (including ‘European mythology of the road, individual

¹ James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 411. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *U*.

² Cheiromancy is also spelled chiromancy, but will be designated as cheiromancy throughout this chapter as this spelling is in keeping with the related nineteenth-century sources. Cheiromancy is the more archaic term for palmistry and is defined as: ‘Divination by the hand; the art of telling the characters and fortunes of persons by inspection of their hands; palmistry’ (OED).

destiny, the quest for identity’); 5: journeying along a road (freedom) to the city (home); 6: the Other (the female); 7: ‘the incomparable synthesis of craftsmanship and artistry, professionalism and dedication’.³ With this comprehensive recipe for the labyrinth of Magical Realism laid out, Martin states: ‘If these seven overlapping and interweaving features are taken into account, it is not difficult to see why Joyce’s monstrous novel effectively inaugurates the twentieth-century literary labyrinth’.⁴ Martin continues his discussion of the modernist legacy of Magical Realism, arguing:

the real heart of what has been called Magical Realism (itself a form of Modernist discourse) [...] is the juxtaposition and fusion, on equal terms, of literate and preliterate worlds, future and past, modern and traditional, the city and the country [...] Joyce and Faulkner had shown the way, and both were from marginal regions with something of bi-culturalism required.⁵

Indeed this could be read as the contents of *Ulysses*. Supporting such a view are critics Lois Parker Zamora and Wendy B. Faris who also point out the transgressive nature of this labyrinth:

magical realism is a mode suited to exploring – and transgressing – boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical or generic. Magical realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems which would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction.⁶

Ulysses is well situated as part of Magical Realism if not its progenitor. The subversive nature of *Ulysses* transgresses traditional boundaries of: form, time, place, gender, fantasy/reality, life/death and, of course, language; indeed these are boundaries to be ‘erased, transgressed, blurred, brought together, or otherwise fundamentally refashioned’.⁷ It is this ‘fusion’ and ‘transgression’, of which Parker Zamora, Faris and Martin write, which allows Joyce’s labyrinth of nonverbal communicators to come to the fore in “Circe”.

³ Gerald Martin, *Journeys Through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 130-33.

⁴ Ibid, p. 133.

⁵ Ibid, p. 127.

⁶ Lois Parker Zamora & Wendy B. Faris (eds), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 5-6.

⁷ Ibid, p. 6.

While Magical Realism is often associated with Latin American literature, Maria Tymoczko's *The Irish Ulysses* specifically and Amaryll Chanady's *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved and Unresolved Antimony* more generally, stand as examples of how Joyce's work is indicative of this form.⁸ Tymoczko suggests that Joyce's reconciling of his Irish traditions with the dominant discourse of the West in which he writes – his 'bi-culturalism' – is no different to Latin American authors reconciling their worldview with that of Western beliefs and culture; they are both 'faced with the problem of how to represent the interface of two conceptions of reality'.⁹ Magical Realism allows for the transgression of such borders, and permits the creation of new meanings from this merging of seemingly dichotomous views. William Spindler explores the term 'Magical Realism' from Franz Roh's original term of finding the magical in everyday occurrences to Angel Flores' later interpretation as the real running concurrent with supernatural/fantastic events. Spindler also offers further definition to the term as including the variants Metaphysical Magic Realism, Anthropological Magic Realism and Ontological Magic Realism.¹⁰ It is this latter definition which best fits Joyce's "Circe": 'the supernatural is presented in a matter-of-fact way as if it did not contradict reason, and no explanations are offered for the unreal events in the text'.¹¹ Like Bloom, '[t]he narrator in Ontological Magic Realism is not puzzled, disturbed or sceptical of the supernatural...he or she describes it as if it was a normal part of ordinary everyday life' where '[n]o explanation is called for, or put forward, for the incredible occurrence. The reader is simply invited to accept the ontological reality of the event'.¹²

⁸ See Maria Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and Amaryll Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antimony* (New York: Garland, 1985).

⁹ Tymoczko, p. 213.

¹⁰ See William Spindler, 'Magic Realism: A Typology', *Forum For Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, (1993), pp. 75-85.

¹¹ Spindler, p. 82.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 82; p. 83.

This style of Magical Realism is further complemented by the theatrical format of “Circe”, where even the stage directions themselves work as nonverbal communication; not as narrative but simply as objective statement. Tymoczko explores Joyce’s choice of dramatic form for “Circe”, ‘particularly in view of the fact that drama is not a native Irish literary form’, but goes on to suggest that a writer of his generation would find it hard to resist a form that is newly flourishing in Ireland and one which allows him smoothly to incorporate views of ‘Irish otherworld narratives’.¹³ My reading supports Tymoczko’s latter assertion as the dramatic structure actually allows and accommodates the form of Magical Realism where real and surreal events and characters are introduced simultaneously. Just as the reader does not question Bloom’s stroll through Nighttown or his meeting Stephen and Lynch in Bella’s whorehouse, neither does the reader question the gender transformations or Bloom having conversations with the dead; they all run concurrently and are all of equal credibility.

The theatrical nature of this chapter and, indeed, the setting of the whorehouse itself work well to compliment the form of Magical Realism. Supernatural or fantastic events and characters are seamlessly introduced through stage settings and directions continuous with the “real” timeline, location and characters. Austin Briggs’ study of the connection between the stage and the brothel, suggests that with the brothel, ‘Joyce found a ready-made setting for a drama that insists on the theatricality of the real and the reality of the theatrical’.¹⁴ Briggs’ convincing analysis is furthered with his correlation between actress and whore; in fact, in the late nineteenth century, the word actress became synonymous with whore: ‘the meaning of the two words were at times indistinguishable’.¹⁵

¹³ Tymoczko, pp. 212-13.

¹⁴ Austin Briggs, ‘Whorehouse/Playhouse: The Brothel as Theatre in the “Circe” Chapter of *Ulysses*’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2002), p. 56.

¹⁵ Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 33.

Brothels have an air of the theatrical and like actresses, whores must perform a certain role, one that is not natural but affected and of artifice; but unlike actresses, and even more unlike “real women”, whores are able ‘to proclaim to the world the passions that proper ladies were made to conceal’.¹⁶ Just as Zoe, Bella and the other whores are able to voice their sexual endeavours (‘I let him larrup it into me for the fun of it’ (*U*, p. 479)), so too is Bloom given a stage to voice his desires such as voyeuristically watching Boylan and Molly (‘(*His eyes widely dilated, clasps himself.*) Show! Hide! Show! Plough her! More! Shoot!’ (*U*, p. 528)). The performance is furthered with the feminised Bloom when Bello orders him to bend to the whim of his male clients and act the part: ‘Let them all come. The scanty, daringly short skirt, riding up at the knee to show a peep of white pantelette, is a potent weapon [...] Bring all your powers of fascination to bear on them. Pander to their Gomorrahan vices’ (*U*, p. 506). This kind of “performance” is essential to the sexual relationships between a whore and a client; it is this acting, as Briggs puts it, that is the creation of ‘the fantasy that is central to the stage and the brothel alike’.¹⁷ In this light then, a reading of Bloom’s interaction with both Zoe and Bella, their performances as well as their nonverbal communication, will proffer further illumination to the gendered role of the hand and its wider meanings in “Circe” and in *Ulysses* as a whole.

This is not the first reading of *Ulysses* which moves away from the traditional language of words; Jacqueline F. Eastman, for example, suggests that *Ulysses* is imbued with the language of flowers. Just as flowers can represent ‘sexuality, the female and the lure of the exotic’ as well as romantic exchange between lovers in “Lotus Eaters”,¹⁸ so too can hands and their movements symbolise sexuality, gender and allurement in “Circe”.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷ Briggs, p. 56.

¹⁸ Jacqueline F. Eastman, ‘Language of Flowers: A New Source for “Lotus Eaters”’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2006), p. 379.

This chapter, more so than any other, is important for setting down the principles of the language of gesture and offering an insight into how important hands and their use are to *Ulysses* as a whole. Many in/animate objects and concepts which do not usually possess vocal abilities are embodied with the power of language in “Circe” – the bells, the soap, the wreaths, the timepiece, the quoits, the kisses, the chimes, the buckles, the gasjet, the cap, the end of the world, the doorhandle, the fan, the hoof, the yews, the waterfall, the button, the boots, the hours, and the bracelets. So along with this vast list, hand movement and associated body language clearly also figure prominently in this language as they become silent communicators of intent, desire, dislike, sexuality and power.

Zoe

In the Nighttown scene there is almost a reversal of the gender defined hands found in *The Waste Land*. While Eliot’s typist has the automatic, mechanical hands and the clerk has the masculine, active hands, in “Circe” it is Bloom who takes on the qualities of the feminine passive hands and Zoe who has the active hands. For example, Bloom passively lets Zoe’s hands come into contact with his body: ‘*His skin, alert, feels her fingertips approach. A hand slides over his left thigh*’ (*U*, p. 450) which is reminiscent of *The Waste Land*’s clerk whose ‘Exploring hands encounter no defence’¹⁹ from the passive typist. Equally it is Bloom who echoes the typist’s “automatic” hand when he is ‘*mechanically caressing her right boob with a flat awkward hand*’ (*U*, p. 451). Zoe’s performativity is evident in the actions of her hands; indeed, her job as a prostitute requires her to perform for her male clients and provide them with what they want. Her experienced hands speak the language of performative knowledge as they glide and slide smoothly around, knowing how to elicit excitement from Bloom’s skin while contrarily, Bloom becomes mechanical and his sexual

¹⁹ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1999), p. 32.

endeavours appear to be automatically “going through the motions” rather than genuinely and eagerly exploring Zoe’s body. Zoe’s hands also begin to possess animalistic qualities, while Bloom’s continue to be unsuccessful: ‘(*She holds his hand which is feeling for her nipple.*) I say, Tommy Tittlemouse. Stop that and begin worse. Have you cash for a short time? Ten shillings? [...] (*She pats him offhandedly with velvet paws*)’ (*U*, p. 471). While Bloom’s roaming hands are ineffective, it is Zoe’s “paws” which dictate what is allowed and what is not. Zoe continues to employ her animalistic qualities by performing ‘*kittenishly*’ (*U*, p. 493) so as to entice the men and place them in the position of her choosing. Her authority, and indeed her ‘velvet paws’, also highlight the higher status of this “ten shilling whorehouse”, as ten shillings is a considerable price to pay considering Bloom’s average monthly wage of £3.²⁰ It does move Zoe and Bella’s other prostitutes away from the typical street whores who would charge much less, such as Cissy Caffrey who is a tenth of the price as ‘only a shilling whore’ (*U*, p. 546). This clearly places Bella Cohen’s brothel higher up in the market or, more correctly, as Bella doesn’t view her “establishment” in those terms: ‘This isn’t a brothel. A ten shilling house’ (*U*, p. 543), giving her establishment a higher status.

The power play is important to the exchange between Bloom and Zoe; Bloom’s contrasting weakness is seen in his lack of virility, which is in constant question throughout this section. Whilst he does make attempts to exhibit his sexual desire, with innuendoes made from Zoe’s smoking: ‘The mouth can be better engaged than with a

²⁰ Using *Thom’s Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for the Year 1904* (Dublin: Alex. Thom & Co., 1904) and converting it to American money in 1985, rather than the British pound, Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman in *Ulysses Annotated* decipher Bloom’s annual income as such: ‘Bloom receives a commission from the *Freeman’s Journal* for £1 7s. 6d. – more than half a month’s rent and roughly equivalent to \$150. His endowment insurance policy will be worth £500 (\$53,000 in staples?) when it matures. His stock holdings have a face value of £900 (\$95,580?) and would give him an annual income of £36 (\$3,825)’ (Don Gifford & Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s Ulysses*, rev. edn (London: University of California Press, Ltd., 1988), p. 7). Therefore, on this estimation Bloom’s monthly income would roughly be £3, weekly being approximately 15s., certainly making Zoe’s services cost a significant sum of money.

cylinder of rank weed' (*U*, p. 451), his masculine activity is usurped by Zoe: '*Her hand slides into his left trouser pocket and brings out a hard black shrivelled potato*' (*U*, p. 450). While Zoe's actions assume her professional agency, they also go further as they highlight Bloom's sexual inadequacies – what she finds in his pocket is not the 'hard' (*U*, p. 450) item she was looking for but a shrivelled potato. Of course it is not a far leap to make an association with Bloom's potato and Odysseus' moly, given by Hermes. The plant which had a 'black root and a milky white flower'²¹ was used as a protective talisman from Circe's magic and the looming entrance of Bello is foreseen by Bloom when he fears 'I should not have parted with my talisman' (*U*, p. 496), for it is when the potato is in Zoe's possession that Bloom falls for the magic of Bello.

The potato possesses multiple symbolic and metaphorical purposes. Robert Merritt for example regards its multifarious meanings to include the obvious political and historical significance of the potato in Ireland's history and the famine, folklore, and the Peruvian potato-mother. Merritt also highlights its physical (and thus metaphorical) connection with other objects throughout Bloom's day: 'As the day progresses, this "mascot" rubs against other objects such as the *Sweets of Sin*, so that through the process of transference it becomes a mocking fetish that reminds Bloom, strolling with hands in pockets, of Molly's infidelity'.²² In the context of Bloom's faltering masculinity, and to further the idea of Bloom's 'broken sexual relationship with Molly',²³ the potato can represent potential fertility which is left impotent with its blackened and shrivelled appearance. In this situation the blight appears to affect more than the potato.

²¹ Homer, *Odyssey* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1945), p. 167

²² Robert Merritt, 'Faith and Betrayal: The Potato in *Ulysses*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1990), p. 269.

²³ Merritt, p. 270.

For Bloom, this talisman gives dual meanings to “root vegetable” and links to the issues with Bloom’s lineage. The potato is ‘a relic of poor mamma’ (*U*, p. 518), a sign of his seldom spoken of Irish roots, but it is unable to be handed down to his son, Rudy.²⁴ Not only does this, again, highlight another of Bloom’s failings as he has no male heir to pass the potato on to (his daughter, Milly, being notably absent in this female line²⁵) but it also raises the question: did the blight start with his parentage and has it been handed down through the generations? However, for Merritt the potato possesses sexual connotations in relation to Bloom and the transference from Bloom to Zoe and back again acts as a surrogate for Bloom; it symbolises sexual intercourse but “protects” Bloom from infidelity with whores’.²⁶ However, I would suggest a return to Bloom’s faltering masculinity and sexual passivity – the only sexual act Bloom partakes in, on this day, is masturbation when he is at the beach watching Gerty. He even thinks that it is ‘Not likely’ (*U*, p. 450) that he has a hard chancre;²⁷ his attention is not focused on the ‘musical peepshow’ (*U*, p. 450) of which Bella complains as Zoe ‘*hauls up a reef of her slip, revealing her bare thigh and unrolls the potato from the top of her stocking*’ (*U*, p. 518), but on regaining his talisman because ‘There is a memory attached to it. I should like to have it’ (*U*, p. 518). Instead of the potato passing between Bloom’s and Zoe’s groins in a sexual manner, it links back to Bloom’s vision of his parents earlier in the chapter. Rudolf, Bloom’s father, berates Bloom for his unmanliness in being taken advantage of by other men, and also calls into question Bloom’s respect for his heritage: ‘(*With contempt.*) *Goim*

²⁴ Rudy, Bloom and Molly’s son, died when he was young and is a continual reminder of “what could and should have been” throughout the novel; the death of their son can also be seen as the death of their relationship and another nod towards Bloom’s masculine deficiencies.

²⁵ Milly is presumably absent from this lineage as her maternal family line comes from the exotic Spanish Molly, giving her no Irish maternal roots.

²⁶ Merritt, p. 273.

²⁷ A hard ulceration usually resulting from syphilis, which Bloom thinks he is unlikely to have contracted as he, presumably, has not recently been sexually involved.

nachez Nice spectacles for your poor mother!’ (U, p. 417). This is followed by the image of Bloom’s mother, Ellen, and his projection of her parental disappointment:

O blessed Redeemer, what have they done to him! My smelling salts! (*She hauls up a reef of skirt and ransacks the pouch of her striped blay petticoat. A phial, an Agnus Dei, a shrivelled potato and a celluloid doll fall out.*) Sacred Heart of Mary, where were you at all, at all?

(*Bloom, mumbling, his eyes downcast begins to bestow his parcels in his filled pockets but desists, muttering*). (U, p. 417)

When Ellen ‘hauls up a reef of skirt’ she directly foreshadows Zoe when she ‘hauls up a reef of slip’, underneath which the shrivelled potato is bestowed. In this way, Zoe becomes a surrogate for Bloom’s deceased mother. His parents’ comments unsteady both his masculine and national identity; he is rejected as a Gentile by his Jewish father (‘Goy’) but also despaired of by his Irish Catholic mother (‘Sacred Heart of Mary’), both of which leave him with a faltering masculinity, as he is muddled, cut and mumbling with subservient, downcast eyes. So, if he is a disappointment to his parents, is this continued with his own offspring and is he a disappointment to his children? His mother’s Agnus Dei further links to the vision of Rudy’s ‘*white lambskin [which] peeps out of his waistcoat pocket*’ (U, p. 565) and is a combination of Christian and Jewish theology with regard to sacrificial lambs. Rudy therefore becomes the sacrificial lamb which is to atone for the sins of the father. So not only does this shrivelled potato unsteady Bloom’s sense of masculinity in sexual terms with Zoe, but also in terms of what is handed down through the family line, as a disappointment as a son to his parents and as a disappointment as a father with his lack of a surviving male heir – the lineage fails in his hands.

As Zoe continues to entice Bloom, seemingly without much difficulty, her animalistic qualities persist:

ZOE

Silent means consent. (*With little parted talons she captures his hand, her forefinger giving to his palm the passtouch of secret monitor, luring him to his*

doom.) Hot hands cold gizzard [...] *She crosses the threshold. He hesitates, she turns and, holding out her hands, draws him over.* (U, pp. 472-3)

The reference to her talons signals her prowess as a bird of prey and instantly instils her with power, more so than her previous velvety paws, indicating that with her adept talons she has caught her prey. Her powerful and dangerous hands mean that the mere touch of her forefinger can signal impending danger. Here Zoe becomes a mixture of Odyssean mythical beings: like the Sirens she possesses fluid qualities (her '*fluid slip*' and the '*Blue fluid*' which '*again flows over her flesh*' (U, p. 472; p. 481)) and she is able to lure Bloom towards his danger; she can also be seen as a mythical creature such as a griffin, with both the talons of an eagle and the paws of a lion, and clearly she can be seen to possess the alluring qualities of one of the goddesses, such as Circe. This combination of qualities and assets certainly bestows her with colossal power when contrasted with Bloom's relative weakness. Here, her hands hold the control and become the instruments of her endeavour as she uses them successfully to entice him over the threshold and into the whorehouse.

However, Bloom's fantasies in "Circe" do allow him some exploration of experiences that he is not privy to in his normal life; ranging from sexual fantasy to, more importantly, fantasies of power: which allow him to regain a sense of authority and control and work to reassert his masculinity. One such fantasy propels him to a facially morphing, '*twelve dozen oyster (shells included)*' eating, body-contorting healer who is able to climb Nelson's Pillar, hang from the top by his eyelids and, most significantly, blot out '*the sun by extending his little finger*' (U, p. 467). This fantasy allows Bloom to acquire power, albeit under the phantasmagorical remit of Magical Realism, but it does allow him to become other people, such as Lord Byron and Jean Jacques Rousseau, to heal sufferers of the king's evil and to possess so much power that he is able to eclipse a celestial body with just his little finger, firmly placing awesome potency in his hands or, indeed, fingers.

Nonetheless, Bloom's power is once again, literally and figuratively, taken out of his hands when Zoe initiates palm reading amongst the group. Starting with Stephen, the control of this exchange is, once again, in Zoe's hands:

STEPHEN

(Extends his hand to her smiling and chants to the air of the bloodoath in the Dusk of the Gods.)

[...]

ZOE

(Tragically.) Hamlet, I am thy father's gimlet! *(She takes his hand.)* Blue eyes beauty I'll read your hand. *(She points to his forehead.)* No wit, no wrinkles *(She counts.)* Two, three, Mars, that's courage. *(Stephen shakes his head.)* No kid.

LYNCH

Sheet lightening courage. The youth who could not shiver or shake. *(To Zoe.)* Who taught you palmistry? (*U*, p. 523)

Zoe uses her allure and flattery to charm Stephen into having his palm read and the exchange is played out through the nonverbal language of hands. Seeing the effect soon entices the other men in the group, leading Lynch to enquire as to how Zoe learnt this art.

Palmistry, or Cheiromancy as it was once known, grew in popularity in the nineteenth century; moving from its gypsy roots into the parlours of the refined where men and women alike would search for insight into their futures from the lines and shapes of their hands. In the mid 1800s Captain Casimir Stanislas d'Arpentigny was the first to catalogue hands into six prime categories: the Spatulate, the Square, the Conic, the Elementary, the Knotty and the Pointed or Psychic, with a seventh category being added later – the Mixed.²⁸ These categories are based on the physical characteristics of the hand and offer insight into the bearer's character – that is, unless you are a woman. d'Arpentigny has a separate system for women; while similar to the male hand they differ in relation to the Spatulate and the Square hand as they are 'much less intense among

²⁸ d'Arpentigny's research was published in the 1839 book *La Chiromanie*, which offered a scientifically based analysis of the hand and his classifications of hand shapes are still used in palmistry today.

women, by reason of the suppleness of their muscles, than they are in us'.²⁹ He goes on to state: 'Few women have Knotty fingers, for few women are gifted with the talent of combination' and if they did possess this typically masculine characteristic then they 'would yield less easily to inspirations of fantasy'.³⁰ Comte de Saint-Germain offered a practical study guide of Palmistry in 1897 which details d'Arpentigny's work and refers to him as the "Master"; Saint-Germain furthers the classification of women into the following categories: the Dreamer, the Emotional, the Globe-Trotter, the Homebody, the Drudge and the Quick-Tempered – certainly an all-encompassing selection.³¹

Adrien Adolphe Desbarolles continued the interest in what hands can tell about their owners; whilst claiming that his study had a scientific foundation, Desbarolles moved more towards the mystic than d'Arpentigny's physiological study, though clearly still built upon d'Arpentigny's work. Following his first book *Les Mysteres de la Main* published in 1859,³² Desbarolles' second book *Revelations Completes* (1879) leaves the more scientific study behind and concentrates on the features that we now associate with palmistry – the lines of the hand. Later Edward Heron-Allen translated d'Arpentigny's work into English in 1886 and wrote two of his own studies on palmistry *A Manual of Cheirosophy* and *Practical Cheirosophy: A Synoptical Study of the Science of the Hand* and, on both sides of the Atlantic, brought renewed interest in the significance of the hand.³³ He had great standing with notable society including Oscar Wilde and is said to have influenced Wilde's

²⁹ d'Arpentigny quoted in Comte de Saint-Germain, *Study of Palmistry for Professional Purposes and Advanced Purposes* (Montana: Kessinger Publishing Co, [1897] 1994), p. 72.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 72-3.

³¹ Taken from G. W. Gessmann's 'Die Frauenhand', *A Study of Physiognomy* Vol. 82, No. 8 (1894), in Saint-Germain, p. 75.

³² For analysis of how Joyce's palmistry in "Circe" accurately corresponds with Desbarrolle's *Les Mysteres de la Main* (Paris, 1859) see Phillip F. Herring, *Joyce's Ulysses Notesheets in the British Museum* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1972), p. 46.

³³ Edward Heron-Allen, *A Manual of Cheirosophy* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1885) and *Practical Cheirosophy: A Synoptical Study of the Science of the Hand* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1887).

story “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy”.³⁴ During his varied career, Heron-Allen wrote various historical and practical guides to palmistry and it was said of him that ‘it is through him and his books that all London society has so suddenly taken up this “fad,” so that wherever you go young ladies demand to see what kind of a line of life your hand reveals and if its wrinkles mask some ghastly secret’.³⁵ In this way, this “fad” meant that your future lay not in your hands but *on* your hands.

This strange and intriguing mix of science and mysticism created a craze amongst a Victorian society which was so fascinated by the occult. The ripple effect of such a craze, like any other, made its way down to lower rungs of society and this is reflected in its placement in Bella’s establishment and with its occupants’ interest. Returning to the examining of Stephen’s ‘Woman’s hand’ (*U*, p. 523), Zoe and the other whores offer their cheiromantic interpretation of the men:

STEPHEN
(*Murmurs.*) Continue. Lie. Hold me. Caress. I could never read His handwriting
except His criminal thumbprint on the haddock.

ZOE
What day were you born?

STEPHEN
Thursday. Today.

ZOE
Thursday’s child has far to go. (*She traces lines on his hand.*) Line of fate.
Influential friends.

FLORRY
(*Pointing.*) Imagination.

ZOE
Mount of the moon. You’ll meet with a... (*She peers at his hand abruptly.*) I won’t
tell you what’s not good for you. Or do you want to know?

BLOOM
(*Detaches her fingers and offers his palm.*) More harm than good. Here. Read
mine.

³⁴ See Joanne Navarre’s interesting article, ‘Oscar Wilde, Edward Heron-Allen, and the Palmistry Craze of the 1880s’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, Vol. 54, No. 2, (2011), pp. 174-184.

³⁵ ‘Foreign Gossip from our London correspondent’, *New York Times*, 7 November 1886, p. 5, quoted in Joanne Navarre, p. 174.

BELLA
 Show. (*She turns up Bloom's hand.*) I thought so. Knobby knuckles, for the
 women.
 ZOE
 (*Peering at Bloom's palm.*) Gridiron. Travels beyond the sea and marry money.
 BLOOM
 Wrong.
 ZOE
 (*Quickly.*) O, I see. Short little finger. Henpecked husband. That wrong?
 [...]
 BLOOM
 (*Points to his hand.*) That weal there is an accident. Fell and cut it twenty two years
 ago. I was sixteen. (*U*, pp. 524-525)

Joyce's diligent research is apparent in his representation of palmistry as the root of his readings in *Ulysses* follows the palm reading conventions of the time quite accurately,³⁶ however, these readings are also mixed with some humorous telltale characteristics of each of the characters. Taking a purely accurate approach to this cheiromancy session, Zoe's reading of Stephen's line of fate indicates that it is rising and he will gain prosperity through 'influential friends'. Florry's summation is right when she points towards imagination in Stephen's hands; this shows that Stephen has a pronounced Mount of Moon which represents imagination, beauty and success; it is also said that this area is often associated with Men of Letters, creativity and artists, characteristics which we can see clearly in Stephen (especially if he is representative of Joyce himself³⁷) who is known as the aesthete. However, Zoe's reading of Bloom's palm is, at first, less convincing when she refers to his marrying money, although travelling the sea can be seen in the exotic, Spanish Molly. Gifford and Seidman have this section as indecipherable in *Ulysses Annotated*, stating that 'Gridiron. Travels beyond the sea and marry money' is 'Cryptic and thus

³⁶ John S. Rickard suggests that Joyce's knowledge of palmistry lore was obtained through the booklet *The Book of Charms and Ceremonies: Whereby All May Have the Opportunity of Obtaining Any Object They Desire* authored by Merlin. See John S. Rickard 'Chiromancy in *Ulysses*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (1996), pp. 446-447. Again see Phillip F. Herring, *Joyce's Ulysses Notesheets in the British Museum* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1972), p. 46.

³⁷ As stated in *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, 'Joyce was born on Thursday, 2 February 1882, and the presumption is that that is Stephen's birthday as well.' (Don Gifford & Robert J. Seidman, California: University of California Press, 2nd ed. rev. 2008, pp. 511-512).

difficult to interpret from handbooks of palmistry’;³⁸ however, in my interpretation, Zoe’s comment ‘gridiron’ represents criss-cross or hashed lines, or the Grille as it is known in palmistry. The presence of the Grille on Bloom’s hand is, in fact, quite accurate as it indicates obstacles and if present on a mount impedes its qualities. This would mean that potentially Bloom has the Grille present on the Mounts of Venus (love/physical attributes), Moon (imagination/beauty/success),³⁹ Apollo (sense of self/fatherhood) and Jupiter (authority).⁴⁰

The humorous approach is seen in Zoe’s comment about Bloom being a ‘Henpecked husband’ as throughout *Ulysses* this is the consensus of opinion, and is also a way to destabilise Bloom and reduce his masculine standing. However, in palmistry the little finger is related to communication and it being short can mean underdevelopment in this area which would indicate one-sided communication in the marriage. Clearly Bloom’s closing remarks on the cheiromancy session are indicative of his pragmatic nature and an attempt to regain control as he discredits all of his (accurate) reading stating that the physical manifestations upon his hand are due to an accident and clearly not a higher power, thus reducing Zoe’s power and increasing his own. Whilst this cheiromancy session commands but a couple of pages, it does bring the role of the hand, in its multifarious representations, back to the fore in “Circe” and illustrates Joyce’s and society’s interest in palmistry. The cheiromancy session is certainly performed by the women: they orchestrate, direct and act out the scene and the men present become both participants and observers of

³⁸ Ibid, p. 512.

³⁹ Implications of health in relation to this Mount can also indicate a disposition towards hallucinations which is, perhaps, noteworthy in this hallucinogenic episode.

⁴⁰ Joyce’s notesheets suggest further Mounts and his have slightly different representations from that which we know today. In ‘Some Corrections and Additions to Norman Silverstein’s “Magic on the Notesheets of the Circe Episode”’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1965), Phillip F. Herring states that Joyce’s notes read as such:

Mounts of Venus, Jove, Saturn,
 apollo, Mercury.
love, ambition, conduct,
 art, industry. (p. 219)

the female display. Once again, the power is in favour of the women and it is the whores who take control.

Bella/Bello

According to Zamora and Faris, it is the ‘propensity of magical realist texts to admit a plurality of worlds means that they often situate themselves on liminal territory between or among worlds – in phenomenal and spiritual regions where transformation, metamorphosis, dissolution are common, where magic is a branch of naturalism, or pragmatism.’⁴¹ Then it is natural, in the Ulyssean sense, that gender dynamics continue to be reversed in “Circe” as Bloom becomes increasingly feminised, made complete with his hallucinogenic metamorphosis into a woman. Bella the ‘*massive whoremistress*’ (*U*, p. 494) becomes the dictatorial and sadistic Bello who completely dominates Bloom. Again, the actions of the hands also become reversed as Bloom’s become weak and passive and Bello possesses the traditional masculine active hands.

Not only is Bloom feminised physically he is also sexually subjugated by Bello’s masculine dominance. Looking at the language of gesture, all of Bello’s hand movements exhibit aggression and violence (*‘He thrusts out a figged fist and foul cigar’* (*U*, p. 501)). These acts of male sexual aggression allow Bello to possess Bloom in a sadomasochistic interplay; Bloom, already in a submissive position (on his hands and knees), is dealt with aggressively as *‘Bello grabs her hair violently and drags her forward’* and *‘twists her arm’* (*U*, p. 499). This last ironic play on words perhaps signals female sexual weakness: women have to be persuaded into certain sexual acts. However, this is not the kind of woman we have seen throughout *Ulysses* in which female agency, especially sexually, is prevalent in

⁴¹ Parker Zamora & Faris, p. 6.

the characters such as Molly, the whores, Bella, and even Gerty. This lack of female agency is peculiar to the feminised Bloom which, in turn, reflects *his* unsteady gendered identity as it transverses whichever gender he has. The pinnacle of physical and sexual domination over the feminised Bloom comes when Bello ‘*plunges it elbowdeep in Bloom’s vulva*’ (*U*, p. 505), an act of fisting which shows the extent of male sexual power held in Bello’s hands.

The idea of control over women is reaffirmed in their attire: Bello instructs Bloom to become like the other whores and ‘be laced with cruel force into vicelike corsets of soft dove coutille, with whalebone busk, to the diamond trimmed pelvis, the absolute outside edge, while your figure, plumper than when at large, will be restrained in nettight frocks’ (*U*, p. 502). The disparity between wearer and observer of the pleasure gained from such “attractive” attire is seen in the contrasting juxtaposition of ‘vicelike’ and ‘soft’ and this constricting apparel becomes metaphorical for the control of women and their bodies – a measure enforced not only by men but by the hands of other women. However, in the context of Bella’s whorehouse, the clothing worn by the whores, and Bloom, problematises some theories of women’s apparel. Thorstein Veblen contends that corsets are symbolic of women’s economic dependence, rendering them physically incapable of labour; however, the body of a whore *is* the tool of her labour. Nevertheless, Veblen’s argument has some merit:

The corset is, in economic theory, substantially a mutilation, undergone for the purpose of lowering the subject’s vitality and rendering her permanently and obviously unfit for work. It is true, the corset impairs the personal attractions of the wearer, but the loss suffered on that score is offset by the gain in reputability which comes of her visibly increased expensiveness and infirmity. It may broadly be set down that the womanliness of woman’s apparel resolves itself, in point of substantial fact, into the more effective hindrance to useful exertion offered by the garments peculiar to women.⁴²

⁴² Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Unwin Books, 1970), p. 121.

With this theory in mind, prostitutes occupy a confused status: clearly they are not part of the leisure class yet they are to wear such attire, but as part of the working class they are to perform the functions of their role. This leaves them in the uneasy (not to mention, uncomfortable) position of being economically driven but within the (physical) restraints of higher society. What Veblen's theory omits is the role aestheticism plays in gender economy; whilst a corset may cause a woman to be less "useful" in manual terms, it sculpts her into a desirable image. Such garments worked aesthetically to enhance a woman by reducing her waist to around twenty inches or preferably lower, pushing her bust forward and throwing her hips back, thus achieving the favoured S-Bend shape of this period.⁴³ While it cannot be said that Bella and her whores were the epitome of the *haute couture* of the *Belle Epoque*, their apparel did reflect that which was "fashion" and Bella's brothel, as Ulick O'Connor asserts, is situated in 'the smartest part of Nighttown', so upmarket that 'each month a special coutourier [sic] visited the street to make sure they were in fashion'.⁴⁴ Indeed, Joyce said himself that, 'Woman's character depends on things they wear'.⁴⁵

⁴³ Although, less elaborate than previous eras, the costume of this period was still likely to consist of a multitude of layers, including: chemises, drawers with much adornment, over these, boned stays or a corset would be tightly fastened, shorter undergarments similar to a chemise, were worn over the corset to protect the dress; suspenders worn on a separate belt around the waist to which stockings were fastened, full length under-petticoats, usually following the same shape of the dress or skirt, and the material and number of the petticoats worn changed according to outfit and season. In fact, Edwardian corsetry was more gruelling and extreme than ever seen before, the desired S-bend shape and straight-fronted corset actually allowed for an even smaller waist and no longer supported the bust as well, which often meant a separate bust bodice was required. The undergarments would have then been covered with the outer dress or skirt and separate bodice. Of course, the extent of the apparel was reflective of the class of the lady, so prostitutes would not have worn quite so many layers – for practical reasons too – hence the term "loose women". See Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress; Clothes and Society 1500-1914* (London: National Trust Enterprises Limited, 1996). Zoe's outfit consists of a 'sapphire' blue slip fasten with three bronze buckles, stockings and black velvet accessories; Kitty wears significantly more including: white petticoat, navy overskirt, corset, navy jacket, doeskin gloves, coral wristlet, boa, a sailor hat and henna red hair; and Florry is seemingly a less attractive whore wearing a tattered mildewed strawberry gown which covers her 'obese' frame; next to Kitty, perhaps Bella offers the most elaborate costume of an ivory gown with a fringed hem, a large black horn fan, jewellery – rings and pendant earrings and much eye make-up (*U*, p. 449; p. 473; p. 474; p. 494).

⁴⁴ Ulick O'Connor, *The Times I've Seen: Oliver St. John Gogarty* (New York: Ivan Obolensky, 1963), p. 56. quoted in Briggs, p. 55.

⁴⁵ Herring, p. 279.

The construction of this desirable image is both useful for those women who are attracting men on whom they can rely economically through marriage, and essential for those women whose job it is to sexually attract men. However, the women Bloom encounters are not all financially dependent upon their husbands; the whores are not married and Molly has her own successful career as a professional singer, but all these women have to look a certain way – they have to appeal. Therefore, the feminised Bloom is cinched in, laced up and buttoned down to highlight this contradictory position of the women who fall between categories and not having a steady gendered identity in either masculine or feminine social circles means that this nomadic position certainly is something to which Bloom can relate.

As will be discussed later with reference to *Pilgrimage*, mention of a kind of wedding ring, which is symbolic of possession, is seen in this section of *Ulysses* when Bello gives Bloom such an emblem: '(He places a ruby ring on her finger.) And there now! With this ring I thee own. Say, thank you, mistress' (*U*, p. 504). This binding offering represents restriction and ownership over Bloom and is a physical symbol of taking his hand in marriage. With this ring, Bloom, who is to be grateful, is tied to Bello and his commands, placing him in the (sub)servient position of taking care of all domestic duties for Bello. Bloom, as a maid of all work, after completing his duties of emptying 'pisspots', laundry, and entertaining Bello's 'boys', must keep her 'ladylike' charms by having 'wellcreamed braceleted hands [which] will wear fortythreebutton gloves newpowdered with talc and having delicately scented fingertips' (*U*, p. 505).⁴⁶ In keeping with the hyperbole and phantasmagoria of "Circe", these forty-three button length gloves are extreme and would have stretched the length from finger tips to arm-pits. But what is

⁴⁶ Gloves would be worn at night to ensure that hands were kept soft and presentable.

important is the significance of such a beauty regime, for it is the physical appearance of these delicate hands which indicate “true” femininity and desirability which ‘for such favours knights of old laid down their lives’ (*U*, p. 505) and is another example of the restrictive nature of the “upkeep” and construction of desirable women’s bodies. Bloom begins to learn the “part” and much like the tempting Nymph who ‘*arches her body in lascivious crispation, placing her forefinger in her mouth*’ (*U*, p. 514) he ‘*simpers with a forefinger in his mouth*’ and realises ‘O, I know what you’re hinting at now’ (*U*, p. 506). This highlights the constructed nature of the allure enacted by the whores, and how placing a finger in the mouth instantly evokes sexual connotations and desirable coyness. Even though the feminised Bloom is slowly learning the tricks of the trade, the masculine Bloom is still being questioned and is presented as an ‘impotent thing’⁴⁷ (*U*, p. 506), which only further unsteadies his gendered identity.

Once the magic of Bello has subsided we are returned to the “real” Bella and Bloom; he soon regains his potato talisman and the retransformation is complete. Bloom tries to reassert some control when he assesses Bella in a less than flattering light: ‘Mutton dressed as lamb. Long in the tooth and superfluous hair [...] take some double chin drill. Your eyes are as vapid as the glass eye of your stuffed fox’ (*U*, p. 517), and he takes the previous control out of her hands: ‘Clean your nailless middle finger first, the cold spunk o your bully is dripping from your cockscomb. Take a handful of hay and wipe yourself’ (*U*, p. 517). Bella’s ‘nailless’ middle finger reduces her stature from a powerful and well

⁴⁷ Bello also insinuates that Bloom’s ‘spunk’ is deficient in volume when compared to Blazes Boylan’s: ‘He shot his bolt, I can tell you! [...] A downpour we want not your drizzle’ (*U*, p. 507). This estimation can be read as a projection of Bloom’s insecurities as we know from Molly’s soliloquy in “Penelope” that she sees it as quite the reverse, saying that: ‘considering the size of it’ Boylan ‘hasn’t a tremendous amount of spunk in him’ and confirming that ‘Poldy has more spunk in him’ (*U*, p. 694). While the Magical Realism of “Circe” allows for Bloom to project desires whether they are of power or of a sexual nature, it also allows for the reverse: a projection of his fears or, indeed, this could equally be read as a projection of his masochistic desires. In this way, Magical Realism, as a style, allows for various angles on what is viewed as truth, offering different interpretations of that which we have already “understood” in previous (and subsequent) chapters and moving away from the linearity of traditional reading.

presented whoremistress to a mere dirty and soiled whore. It is reminiscent of Eliot's 'broken fingernails of dirty hands',⁴⁸ and while superficially she may be painted and preened, this image places Bella distinctly within the "undesirable class": it is her hands that give her away. However, this is a nonverbal judgement and the only way Bloom really asserts any control is financially when he stops Bella "fleecing" Stephen: '(*Quietly lays a half sovereign on the table between Bella and Florry.*) So. Allow me (*He takes up the poundnote.*) Three times ten. We're square', which actually gains Bella's admiration 'You're such a slyboots, old cocky. I could kiss you' (*U*, p. 520). Bloom continues to be in control financially; when Stephen breaks the lamp it is Bloom who tempers down Bella's first request for ten shillings, 'There's not a sixpenceworth of damage done. Ten shillings!' (*U*, p. 543). By using his knowledge of Bella's son he is able to gain charge of the situation: 'And if it were your own son in Oxford' he states and then simply '*throws a shilling on the table*' (*U*, p. 544) for the damage, still paying over the odds but significantly less than Bella's original estimation. So, while Bloom may be unable to gain power sexually in "Circe" his frugal nature wins through and he gains the upper hand financially, both for himself and for Stephen.



If "Circe" sets the stage where the universal language is gesture, then the characters are its silent actors and mime artists. Applying theoretical partialism highlights how more can be seen to be said through the hands of Bloom, Zoe, Bella/Bello and the other characters than in their scripted dialogue. Concerns of power and sexuality are displayed through the hands, with Zoe and Bella/Bello taking the dominant roles in both respects; their

⁴⁸ Eliot, p. 34.

animalistic ‘claws’ and aggressive ‘fists’ control Bloom throughout the chapter and highlight his inadequacies. The dramatic form of “Circe” complements the form of Magic Realism as together they successfully present unconscious desires, extreme fantasies (sexual and otherwise), resurrections of the dead, supernatural and fantastical events alongside real time and accommodate different narrative possibilities. As Tymoczko argues, ‘drama is a form that presents material *as if* it were the case, it is useful for the presentation of fantasy, interior states, different levels of reality, and also different worldviews’.⁴⁹ We would not have such an insight into Bloom’s mind and thus interpretations of others, had we not travelled this hallucinogenic labyrinth with him.

Male/female gender dynamics are strongly apparent in the interaction between the feminised Bloom and the tyrannical Bello, and “Circe” problematises the traditional gender roles by reversing and altering them in this gender-bending way. What “Circe” does most, is to illustrate Bloom’s own unsteady gendered identity – regardless of which gender he is. His masculine identity is continually in question not only in this chapter but in *Ulysses* as a whole, and this uncertainty is continued when he becomes the feminine Bloom, leading the reading to show that it is not necessarily a comment on women in general but more on Bloom specifically. Regardless of all the costumes, make-up, posturing, artifice and gestures, the premise of a whorehouse is fundamentally that of business and where Bloom does gain control over the whores is in the handling of money – the basic currency. As is apparent, hands and gesture are clearly significant to “Circe” and the readings proffered from this investigation certainly ask for a re-examination of the representation of the hand in the rest of *Ulysses*. In this way, the hands offer an interesting insight into the power dynamics between the characters in “Circe”; the scale clearly tipping towards the female

⁴⁹ Tymoczko, p. 216, original emphasis.

side. But could anything else be expected in the lair of the enchantress(es)? Acting their parts, using their sexual allure and offering sexual flexibility, the whores' hands work to take control and all the men among them find themselves unable to refuse. Indeed, Bloom asks about this female control, 'For why should the dainty scented jewelled hand, the hand that rules...?' (*U*, p. 515). and one can only presume that Joyce offers the answer "because they know how to perform". Therefore, in the world of "Circe" where 'silent means consent' (*U*, p. 472) it is only prudent to have one's hands do the talking.

FRAGMENTING THE PERFORMANCE: JEAN RHYS' VOYAGE IN THE DARK

As a modernist trope, fragmentation illustrates the concept of how meaning cannot be fully comprehended through totality. Jean Rhys' work, and particularly her third novel of 1934 *Voyage in the Dark* and its protagonist Anna Morgan, exemplifies this concept, with its fragmented voices, memories, narrative and continuity. Rhys is very much part of this theme in modernist writing with her attention to the complexities of the human mind and self, the chaos of the metropolis, the effect of social oppression, depiction of gendered identities and no linear experience of time. With regard to time, Rhys follows suit with other modernist writers, suggesting that being "in the moment" can mean being in both the past and the present. The scattered and fragmented narrative can be seen to reflect the characters' unstable mental states; the chaotic urban spaces in which they find themselves thus work to give a distorted and unbalanced overall view. My aim is to analyse these fragments so as to give meaning to the whole and illustrate that these fragments are not merely abstract or random, but integral parts of the matrix of meaning and of the self. Whether this fragmentation is viewed as part of a feminist trend, as an expression of trauma, postcolonial writing or as a reaction to social patriarchal oppression,¹ it nonetheless illustrates the modernist trend of fragmenting experiences, places, time and people and how such vast experiences and meanings cannot be read and understood in their entirety. As such, there are no broad strokes to coalesce the themes and bring about an easy understanding; it is by exploring the intricacies that understanding is gained.

¹ Maren Linett, "New Words, New Everything": Fragmentation and Trauma in Jean Rhys', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2005), p. 440-466.

Fragmentation theory is often associated with trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is a prevalent theory in war narrative criticism, which seeks to show the way in which texts possess a fragmented form which reflects the disparate mental state of the author and/or characters. Dissociating oneself from a traumatic event is a commonplace symptom of dealing with a traumatic experience in which ‘the normal mind has a breaking point at which it is unable to cope with and integrate the traumatic experience and becomes divided’.² Further to this, often the victim wants to both share and conceal the event, hence the story being told can be both true (revealing and cathartic) and misleading (secret and protective).³ This can be seen throughout *Voyage in the Dark* where Anna often dissociates herself from a present event and fragments the narrative and continuity by returning to the West Indies of her childhood, leaving the reader uncertain of what has actually happened.

But the fragmentation with which I am concerned is not necessarily from trauma (although it can be read as such). Rather my interest is in the fragmentation of the self which takes place when one’s self is not suitable for the current endeavour. In the case of Anna, she is not necessarily a desirable commodity in the sexual marketplace, and therefore the self must be split into one true self and one constructed self. This latter self is constructed so as to produce a commodity which will be successful and desirable in the kind of marketplace in which Anna finds herself. Theoretical partialism is a helpful concept through which to read Rhys’ work, as applying this approach to the already fragmented style of Rhys’ text further destabilises the characters by focusing on the representation of the hand, and in doing so it does not distort the view but rather

² Elizabeth F. Howell, *The Dissociative Mind*. (New Jersey: The Analytic Press, 2005), p. 62.

³ See Linett, p. 448. Quoting Judith Herman: ‘The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialect of psychological trauma’ (*Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 1). Linett argues that this can be seen in the narrative of *Voyage in the Dark* where some of Anna’s more traumatic memories are ‘layered within other scenes and stories’ (p. 448) thus throwing the reader into uncertainty about the truth of such stories.

complements it and allows for illumination of particular aspects through close analysis. This, in turn, illuminates the novel as a whole and allows for a discovery of the greater meaning of the matrix through the particular component. So, alongside the fragmentation found in the text is the integral role of performativity which is used to develop the constructed self. Joan Riviere's theory of the masquerade of femininity is particularly useful alongside this concept of performance and will be used in the analysis of the text. Riviere's idea of femininity is not that of a natural projection but of a construction which allows the woman to function successfully, sometimes manipulate and ultimately gain the best outcome in her given social milieu.

A few steps up the ladder from Joyce's Nighttown women, Rhys' leading ladies also enter a sexual economy in which women must offer themselves and their bodies in exchange for financial survival, whether that is in the form of a drink, a meal, some clothes, on-going monetary support or simply hard cash. Compared to Joyce's magical and carnivalesque depiction of these women and the experiences which surround them, Rhys' depiction is certainly more bleak. The presence of Émile Zola's *Nana* at the beginning of the novel hints towards the idea of different gendered perspectives. It is Anna who is reading *Nana* and when discussing it with her friend Maudie, she comments, 'Bits of it are all right' only to get the reply from Maudie: 'I know; it's about a tart. I think it's disgusting. I bet you a man writing a book about a tart tells a lot of lies one way and another'.⁴ Does this therefore place Rhys' narrative about a "tart" in a more truthful position than say Zola or Joyce? But 'Modernism's relationship with gender has never been simple' as Deborah Longworth states, 'nor [is it] based on any straightforward binary

⁴ Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 9. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *V*.

understanding of masculine or feminine'.⁵ So, while Rhys obviously writes from a different gendered perspective than Joyce or Zola, she also writes, in part, from experience and is, personally, all too aware of the stark situation that faced women without financial security in a male dominated society. Therefore, while none can be said to be more truthful, perhaps Rhys' practical and economic reading of this situation may shine some light on the novel's bleaker and less fantastical tone, as a woman rapidly decreasing in value in such a marketplace would have a different perspective – one not of the male consumer but of the female consumed.

Rhys' first person narrative in *Voyage in the Dark* echoes that of Richardson's and other female modernists, as we follow a woman and her internal thoughts while she tries to find her way in a male-dominated sphere. Like Miriam in *Pilgrimage*, Rhys' heroines find themselves in a social limbo: as single, financially unstable women they are not part of the private sphere as a wife and mother; nor do they have access to the male public sphere and its associated power. However, this ambivalent social position does allow an exploration of the hitherto unknown; Mary Lou Emery rightly asserts that Rhys' writing belongs amongst other modernist authors, such as Woolf and Richardson, who are able to 'explore the possibilities for women who may now perceive themselves as individuals rather than appendages to fathers and husbands'.⁶ Emery goes on to state that 'Their displaced identity and marginal consciousness reveal modernist subjectivity, not as a retreat into the self, but as a response to a social crisis – the transformation of power in the breakdown of distinctions between public and private lives'.⁷ They are amidst a power play: their unsteady gendered and economic position certainly places them on the back foot and not

⁵ Deborah Longworth, 'Gendering the Modernist Text' in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 160.

⁶ Mary Lou Emery, 'The Politics of Form: Jean Rhys's Social Vision in *Voyage in the Dark* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1984), p. 424.

⁷ Emery, p. 429.

only do they have to negotiate the men they encounter but also the other women in the same position. Anna Morgan, too, is in this limbo; however she is the “other”, coming from the West Indies to the cold and dark dance halls of Britain. She is unwillingly displaced both physically and sexually and becomes part of an economy that is typical of Rhys’ work, where women trade on their bodies and must keep their attractiveness in order to stay relevant in the sexual marketplace.

Voyage in the Dark’s fragmentation of voices, like Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, also displaces its characters leaving them either floundering or blindly and mutely feeling their way. Anna’s experiences, thoughts and opinions are often left unheard by her lover, Walter, who is uninterested in such personal feelings or insights into Anna’s true self. If Anna’s words are left unheard then she, as Stephen Dedalus contended, must resort to the language of gesture, and this is how often her hands reveal more about her and her situation than her words do. Having her “true self” silenced in this way also results in a necessity for Anna to construct an image which is desirable; for it is only practical to please the man upon whom she relies. This is where Riviere’s theory is pertinent when considering Anna’s predicament. Riviere details the cloak that intellectual women must don in order to mask their intellectual qualities or any other such masculine traits and exhibit complete femininity. If Anna is to be the “attractive coquette” for Walter, she cannot express her feelings; now this is not necessarily hysterical emotions but more intellectual ones, as hysterical would at least place her in the definite category of “feminine” which would, in fact, serve her purpose. She must mask any interest in, say, understanding slavery and offer herself as not much more than a trophy, a toy to be played with – but only when Walter desires. This masquerading is adopted as a means of placating the male, and, in psychoanalytical terms, appeasing the father for castrating him and

‘reducing him to nothingness’.⁸ In Anna’s case, whenever she begins to show more depth or talk of her previous life, Walter becomes uninterested and belittles her thoughts. Knowing that this is not a successful approach, Anna must revert to the “feminine” so as to appease him; in order to do so, Anna separates the different parts of herself. In other words an internal fragmentation takes place.

The Performance Begins

The whole novel is a performance, opening with the lines: ‘It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever known’ (*V*, p. 7). This image is repeatedly used throughout the novel and while it suggests that the stage curtain has fallen and the performance has ended, it soon becomes apparent that just as one act ends and the curtain falls, it opens again and another act begins.

The two parts of Anna’s life – childhood and adulthood – become fragmented; two completely separate entities as if two separate lives. Her childhood is one of gaiety and warmth but her adulthood is marred by coldness and unhappiness. This is not solely to do with her geographical positioning but also with the journey from girl to woman; the fragments can be seen as a willed compartmentalisation: Anna wishes to keep her “happy West Indian childhood” untarnished by her “unhappy English adulthood”. Her girlhood friend Francine, a black servant who resided at her home on the island, is associated with happiness and with her childhood: ‘Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad’ (*V*, p. 27). Francine’s influence made the transition of growing up easier, as is seen in the reference to her menarche:

⁸ Joan Riviere, ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’ in *Psychoanalysis and Female Sexuality*, (New Haven: College & University Press, 1966), p. 217.

When I was unwell for the first time it was she who explained to me, so that it seemed quite all right and I thought it was all in a day's work like eating or drinking. But then she went off and told Hester, and Hester came and jawed away at me, her eyes wandering all over the place. I kept saying, 'No, rather not. ... Yes, I see. ... Oh yes, of course. ...' But I began to feel awfully miserable. (*V*, p. 59)

Her fragmented conversation with Hester is later mimicked in her conversations when sex is imminent: initially she refuses – 'No, rather not' – then she is persuaded – 'yes, of course'. The bodily and psychological dissociation that Anna enacts is a form of fragmentation, a 'fragmentation of the psyche' as Maren Linett argues.⁹ Her newly-gained fertility and her sexual relationships are both linked with a sense of refusal, an unwillingness to take the next step and therefore become fragmented as she dissociates herself from them. Anna is aware of the inevitable but it does not stop her wishing otherwise: 'I kept thinking "No. ... No. ... No. ..."' And I knew that day that I'd started to grow old and nothing could stop it' (*V*, p. 62). Of course, growing old has another impact on her once she enters the sexual economy, as women rapidly decrease in value as they age. There are repeated references to this depreciation throughout the novel – 'A few pretty girls and then finish, a blank, a desert [...] That beaten, cringing look – or else as cruel and dried-up as they're made! Méchantes, that's what they are'; 'Well, that is old for a woman. Besides, she'll be blowsy in another year'; 'She really is pretty. But hard – a bit hard [...] They get like that. It's a pity' (*V*, p. 70; p. 75; p. 148) – are but a few examples. Luckily, for the time being 'the child', 'infantile Anna' (*V*, p. 71) has her youthful looks on which to rely. Anna must split herself; dissociate her happy, West Indian "true" childhood self from her new constructed youthful, attractive self. By adopting a mask of femininity, Anna is able to play the part of the coquette, be amusing, be a 'rum little devil' (*V*, p. 45) but not be true or real. So while Anna may not actively choose to adopt this mask, it becomes second nature as she finds a way to survive and act the part in this new sphere.

⁹ Linett, p. 440.

Leaving the perceived reality of her childhood in the West Indies, Anna is unwillingly thrust onto the stage as she starts her adult acting career in the performance of the sexual marketplace. Unaware of where the act begins or ends, at first this transition is difficult for her but as her journey progresses, whilst never becoming a proficient actress, she does, at least, become more accustomed to playing the part.

The Leading Man

It is no wonder that, submerged in a world of buying, selling, exchanging and the consumption of an array of commodities, Anna, too, would become enthralled by consuming, and particularly consuming alcohol which only helps to blur the fragments more. Alcohol is used to make the often humiliating situation with Walter bearable; this social crutch initially starts at the same time as her affair with Walter, thus equating her burgeoning career in the sexual market with that of an alcohol induced haze which again reflects her distorted view of her new role. As Jane Nardin argues, 'Rhys thus makes it clear that alcohol is a useful vocational tool for women in the sex trades, a point of which Anna is partly aware'.¹⁰ This is a theme common to Rhys' interwar fiction, in which most of the female protagonists are associated with alcohol dependency, for reasons which Rhys depicts as survival against patriarchal oppression and lack of female agency.¹¹ It is only when Anna has had a drink or two that she is truly able to play the part of the lover for Walter, and she soon realises that she is unable to do so without. After drinking a second bottle of wine Anna 'felt it warm and happy in my stomach'. The alcohol at least gives her the impression of being warm and happy, albeit a false impression, but at least one which will allow her to act and "look happy" for Walter. At first her alcohol use is not an illness

¹⁰ Jane Nardin, "'As Soon As I Sober Up I Start Again': Alcohol and the Will in Jean Rhys's Pre-War Novels', *Papers on Language & Literature*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2006), p. 61.

¹¹ See Jane Nardin, who proposes that the issue of alcoholism is greatly overlooked in Rhys criticism.

or an addiction but a necessity brought about by her situation. As with the whores in *Ulysses*, Anna's indulgences allow her complaisance and render her more enjoyable for her lover: 'He got up and pulled me up and started kissing me [...] "Champagne and whisky is a great mixture," he said. We went upstairs' (*V*, p. 48). The lack of agency afforded to all of Rhys' protagonists is what drives them towards alcohol as a method of numbing their awareness of their situation and allows them to play a part in having the control taken out of their hands: surely it is better to *choose* to allow alcohol to remove your own agency than to let a man effect such a removal?

Anna's first encounter with her future lover, Walter Jefferies, is, from the outset, that of artifice and pretence: 'When he touched my hand he pretended to shiver. He said "Oh God, cold as ice. Cold and rather clammy"' (*V*, p. 12). The touch of his hand is veiled by performance as he "pretends", and he instantly belittles her, indicating that she is distant and uninviting with her cold and clammy hands. Like Richardson's Miriam, Anna's hands reflect her mood; she associates the cold with being unhappy, stating that in her heart she was sad and it was 'with the same sort of hurt that the cold gave me in my chest' (*V*, p. 14). This is the fundamental difference in her new locale, leaving the happy, sunny, and hot climes of her West Indian childhood to come to the cold, grey and monotonous streets of her unhappy adulthood. Her feelings of sadness and despondency are repeatedly manifested in the temperature of her hands throughout the novel ('When I put my hand against my face it was very cold and my face was hot'; 'My hands were getting cold and I knew I was going to be sick again.'; 'the room was dark, and warm so long as I kept my hands under the blankets' (*V*, p. 21; p. 128; p. 143)). Her hands are rarely other than cold and clammy.

In the same way, Walter uses his hands to control Anna's mood and ultimately herself. Whether it is to entice her or castigate her, the subtle ways he uses his hands have significant influence over Anna. At first he is able to entice and excite her: she repeats to herself 'I could still feel on my face where his hand had touched me' (*V*, p. 31). But when she asks him why he didn't write to her sooner, he does not want to be answerable to her and with a simple hand movement accomplishes this without her even realising: 'he put his hand on my knee and I thought "yes ... yes ... yes ..."' (*V*, p. 31). When he intends on taking their demure tête-à-tête to the bedroom and she is reluctant, he once again persuades her with a touch of his hand: 'I wanted to say, "No, I've changed my mind." But he laughed and squeezed my hand' (*V*, p. 32) and succeeds in seducing her.

As their relationship continues Anna still has difficulty in performing the part; she often says or does things which cause Walter to laugh. She is not versed in the skills of seduction but tries nonetheless: "'Don't do that," I said. "All right, if you like – anything you like, any way you like." And I kissed his hand. "Don't," he said. "It's I who ought to kiss your hand, not you mine"' (*V*, pp. 33-4). She fails to adhere to the etiquette that it is a man who should kiss a woman's hand and not the other way around. Walter passes these faux pas off as inexperience but also belittles her in the process: 'Some people are born knowing their way about; others learn [...] Well, look happy then' (*V*, p. 44). Unlike the experienced hands of Zoe in *Ulysses*, Anna's hands do not speak the language of sexual enticement. Indeed, she must learn to play the part, and the very least she can do is look happy about pleasing him.

When Anna begins to feel comfortable with Walter, she allows the fragmented parts of her life to cross over: 'I wanted to talk about it. I wanted to make him see what it

was like' (*V*, p. 46). Anna wants to disclose part of her past, her childhood in the West Indies, part of who she is but Walter is not concerned with such personal matters or truths. Instead, Walter demeans them and puts it down to her drinking and coaxes her upstairs where he will find pleasure: "“You sound a bit tight,” he said. “Well, let’s go upstairs, you rum child, you rum little devil”” (*V*, p. 48). This constant battle between wanting to share the truth and her thoughts with wanting to please him, means that throughout the novel Anna continually finds it difficult to reconcile her life in the West Indies with that of her life in England, thereby fragmenting them: ‘I got that feeling of a dream, of two things that I couldn’t fit together, and it was if I were making up the names’ (*V*, p. 67). The crossover of the two worlds brings about uneasiness and again makes Anna question what was real and what was not; and in order to cope with this uneasiness, Anna’s compartmentalisation continues to take place.

As their relationship progresses, Walter conceals his hands as he conceals the truth. When their companions, Vincent and Germaine, argue on their trip to the country, Walter explains it away: ‘He put his hands in his pockets and stood rocking backwards and forwards [...] “I don’t know. Bad temper [...] Vincent is going away next week for some time [...] The fact is, she wants him to leave her more money than he can afford”’ (*V*, p. 72). Walter is pre-empting his confession that he too is going away and saying in a veiled manner that she too is not to ask for much money. After this news, Anna finally reaches her breaking point and when Vincent, Germaine and Walter are all laughing at her, she takes the control into her own hands:

I thought, ‘Shut up laughing,’ looking at Walter’s hand hanging over the edge of the mantelpiece.

I said, ‘Oh, stop laughing at me. I’m sick of it.’

‘What’s the joke?’ I said.

They went on laughing.

I was smoking, and I put the end of my cigarette down on Walter's hand. I jammed it down hard and held it there, and he snatched his hand away and said 'Christ!'

But they had stopped laughing. (*V*, p. 74)

This act of violence is directed at Walter's hand and marks Anna's first (and only) step towards an assertion of power. If their relationship is in Walter's control – when they see each other, how he handles Anna, how she must act – then it is only fitting that Anna would attack the hands which hold her. By doing this, Anna is able to make a physical mark on Walter; she will not simply be handled into submission, or any trace of her be washed away – this act permanently places her in his presence and, in fact, on his person.

Vincent's following actions mimic Walter's method of "handling" as he tries to placate her by 'squeezing' her 'hand' and saying 'Don't worry. You'll be all right', but Anna instantly feels defensive and 'pulled my hand away. I thought, "No, I don't like you"' (*V*, p. 74). The gender dynamics in this text are unequal throughout, as any potentially uncomfortable or inappropriate situation brought about by a female is handled by the men by taking hold of or squeezing her hand. In this way the women are infantilised and treated as children who are pacified by a forceful grip. Even though Anna distinctly "doesn't like" Vincent, their future exchanges continue in this unequal manner. Later, Anna feels remorseful about her violent actions towards Walter, and fears retribution stating: 'You don't know how miserable I am about your hand', only to receive a brush off from Walter: "'Oh, that!'" he said. "It doesn't matter"' (*V*, p. 76). But clearly it did matter as this is the beginning of the end of their affair.

Anna often thinks of the letter she would write Walter, ending their affair: 'My darling Walter ...' (*V*, 64). But the letter is never sent, the words are only ever thought of and never written by her hand. This shows the futility of her power in their relationship,

where she knows that it would be best to get out whilst she can but he still firmly holds the control in his hands. It is from his hand that the letters come and direct what she should do. Shortly after the cigarette incident, Anna receives “the letter” ending their affair, but it arrives written in an unknown hand – Walter passes this task to Vincent. By his distancing from handwriting this note himself, Walter is both physically distancing himself from Anna, but also from any unsavoury or un-gentlemanly acts; both ways remove him from any spectacle Anna may make. Aside from ending the affair, Vincent also writes of the pleasure gained from reading and how it can make ‘you see what is real and what is just imaginary’ (*V*, p. 80). This ability is Anna’s ultimate problem with living and functioning in this sphere – separating what is real from what is the performance. Her performance in this marketplace is fundamentally flawed by her need to let the different fragments of her self cross over. Perhaps, had she kept her West Indian past separate and played the role of the young, attractive and doting lover, who shies away from public spectacles, Walter may have not grown tired of her quite so quickly.

In one of Anna’s many frantic drafts of letters written to Walter in a style of outpouring stream of consciousness, she writes something which has more resonance than even she realises:

My dear Walter I’ve read books about this and I know quite well what you’re thinking but you’re quite wrong because don’t you remember you used to joke because every time you put your hand on my heart it used to jump well you can’t pretend that can you you can pretend everything else but not that it’s the only thing you can’t pretend. (*V*, pp. 89-90)

Indeed it is Walter’s hand which controls her heart and pulls the strings in their relationship, but unfortunately Anna’s naivety and inexperience in this kind of social performance means that she does not realise that these feelings too are a pretence – are, in fact, merely a performance.

Anna's hands continue to reflect her unhappiness: 'My hands were very cold and I kept rubbing them together' (*V*, p. 81). When she is faced with Walter after the separation, again she has difficulty in keeping her two selves separate and fragments of her past and images of her hands erupt in her present thoughts: 'The candles crying wax tears and the smell of stephanotis and I had to go to the funeral in a white dress and white gloves and a wreath round my head and the wreath in my hands made my gloves wet – they said so young to die ...' (*V*, p. 83). Here, the image of the funeral is linked to the death of their relationship and the loss of her innocence. Anna's thoughts of wanting to die but being 'too young to die' (*V*, p. 83), the white dress and gloves of her childhood are juxtaposed with her current 'black velvet dress' (*V*, p. 82) which denotes her as an adult. As before, Anna's wet gloves and hands from this memory are linked with unhappiness when her hands become cold and clammy and decidedly unladylike.

The Costume Department

A true performance is not complete without the proper costume and, as Thorstein Veblen aptly stated, 'our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at the first glance'.¹² The importance of a woman's attire and how it influences people's perception of that woman is significant throughout *Voyage in the Dark* and, indeed, in most of Rhys' fiction. Like the power and status afforded to Sasha by her large fur coat in *Good Morning, Midnight*,¹³ Anna realises that a woman's costume achieves more than simply making her look attractive. Cynthia Port also argues this point:

The necessary efforts to project beauty and desirability in an oppressive economy of visual display and exhibition are threatened not only by the women's poverty (on the contrary, their poverty and shabbiness mark them as vulnerable and sexually available),

¹² Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Unwin Books, 1970), p. 119.

¹³ See Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (London: Penguin, 1969).

but also by the exhaustion and depletion of their bodies over time and through the effects of experience.¹⁴

This visual display is important especially in *Voyage in the Dark* where the women have to display themselves in the best light so as to obtain the best man. This is certainly a difficult situation for Anna who has little money on which to live and also is often ill, giving her the double bind of poverty and an ailing body – neither of which are desirable. Anna comes to realise just how important clothes are very early on when she contemplates:

About clothes, it's awful. Everything makes you want pretty clothes like hell. People laugh at girls who are badly dressed. Jaw, jaw, jaw. ... 'Beautifully dressed woman. ...' As if it isn't enough that you want to be beautiful, that you want pretty clothes, that you want it like hell. As if that isn't enough. But no, it's jaw, jaw and sneer, sneer all the time. And the shop-windows sneering and smiling in your face. And then you look at the skirt of your costume, all crumpled at the back. And your hideous underclothes. You look at your hideous underclothes and you think, 'All right, I'll do anything for good clothes. Anything – anything for clothes. (*V*, p. 22)

Despite her initial uncertainty directly after this statement that she would do 'anything' for a better life, this is the turning point for Anna; when she makes this statement she alters her life course and sends herself down a path where, in fact, she will do whatever it takes. The next morning she receives money from Walter to buy herself stockings and instantly she 'was accustomed to it already' (*V*, p. 24). After receiving the money and purchasing her new clothes, Anna is aware of the difference money brings: her voice is no longer 'small and thin' but 'round and full' and even the 'streets looked different that day, just as a reflection in the looking-glass is different from the real thing' (*V*, pp. 24-5). While the new clothes may reflect something different, something more desirable, the 'real thing' is still underneath. But with this newly acquired money, Anna finds performance all the more easy to bear. Veblen discusses this relationship between one's clothing and one's projected identity and social status:

¹⁴ Cynthia Port, "'Money, for the night is coming': Jean Rhys and Gendered Economies of Ageing', *Women: a Cultural Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2001), p. 206.

Simple conspicuous waste of goods is effective and gratifying as far as it goes; it is good *prima facie* evidence of pecuniary success, and consequently *prima facie* evidence of social worth. But dress has subtler and more far-reaching possibilities than this crude, first-hand evidence of wasteful consumption only. If, in addition to showing that the wearer can afford to consume freely and uneconomically, it can also be shown in the same stroke that he or she is not under the necessity of earning a livelihood, the evidence of social worth is enhanced in a very considerable degree. Our dress, therefore, in order to serve its purpose effectually, should not only be expensive, but it should also make plain to all observers that the wearer is not engaged in any kind of productive labour.¹⁵

This association with the change of status which clothes can bring continues throughout the novel, since whenever Anna passes a shop window she is shown a visual display of the Mecca of possibilities. This bombardment of window displays and advertisements and their promised glamour and hope cements Anna's place in the perpetual world of consumption: 'A girl could look lovely in that [...] "If I could buy this, then of course I'd be quite different." Keep hope alive and you can do anything, and that's the way the world goes round' (*V*, p. 111).

In Mansfield's and Richardson's work, gloves are seen as a distinctive part of a lady's attire and are synonymous with a constructed femininity. This is no different in *Voyage in the Dark*. Anna herself links gloves with a ladylike appearance: 'A lady always puts on her gloves before going into the street' (*V*, p. 30), however, equally she is at odds with certain expectations of a lady's dress and, at times, is seen to echo Miriam's dislike of the formalities of women's clothing:

dressing to go to church, and putting on a woollen vest which had shrunk in the wash and was too small, because wool next to the skin is healthy. And white drawers tight at the knee and a white petticoat and a white embroidered dress – everything starched and prickly. And black ribbed-wool stockings with black shoes. [...] And brown kid gloves straight from England, one size too small. 'Oh, you naughty girl, you're trying to split those gloves; you're trying to split those gloves on purpose.' (While you are carefully putting on your gloves begin to perspire and you feel the perspiration trickling down under your arms. The thought of having a

¹⁵ Veblen, p. 120.

wet patch underneath your arms – a disgusting and disgraceful thing to happen to a lady – makes you very miserable). (*V*, p. 36)

This is incredibly similar to Miriam ‘working her fingers into their gloves’¹⁶ when going to church; however, Rhys’ graphic description of Anna perspiring also has a resounding similarity to Joyce’s work. This quotation from Rhys and that in *Pilgrimage* both signal a clear connection between women’s attire and duty with a sense of restriction and the potential for failure in the performance of femininity.

However, her meeting with Maudie on her nineteenth birthday affirms her new status as Maudie commends her new life and stature: ‘And you’ve got a fur coat. Well, if a girl has a lot of good clothes and a fur coat she has something, there’s no getting away from that’ (*V*, p. 39). But Maudie also warns Anna that she must ‘swank’ as much out of Walter as possible (*V*, p. 39). Anna, however, is still too naïve to take such a mercenary approach. Although talking of an earlier time, Veblen’s comments on the role women must play are particular apt for Anna’s situation in life: ‘At the stage of economic development at which the women were still in the full sense property of the men, the performance of conspicuous leisure and consumption came to be part of the services required of them’.¹⁷ Although Anna is not Walter’s property in the sense in which Veblen writes, she is still kept by him and, in return, her service is to be appropriately presentable for him. Maudie continues her analysis of the association between women and their attire, telling of an exchange she had with a man, in which she repeats his words: ‘have you ever thought that a girl’s clothes cost more than the girl inside them?’ (*V*, p. 40). The distinction between the commodities on sale is completely blurred; the relationship between the girl and the lover becomes a business transaction with the man investing more in the apparel itself than in the

¹⁶ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 70.

¹⁷ Veblen, p. 126.

girl who wears it. Similar to Maudie, Ethel's hands later covet Anna's coat ('Her little hands, with short, thick fingers, felt it' (*V*, pp. 95-96)) and she weighs up the value of the coat and the girl inside it: 'I can't think why you stay in a room in Camden Town when you've got a coat like that' (*V*, p. 96). It is apparent that Anna's clothes and the epitomic fur coat have achieved a perceived status of which she once only dreamt.

Supporting Actresses

It is clear that it is not only the men who weigh up the girls and their perceived worth, but also other women. The social act continues with the women that Anna encounters and she must be ever vigilant of the self that she projects. Almost every interaction becomes a performance, even meeting her step-mother, Hester. As they dine together, Anna observes that everyone eating is part of the act:

The stew tasted of nothing at all. Everybody took one mouthful and then showered salt and sauce out of a bottle. Everybody did it mechanically, without a change of expression, so that you saw they knew it would taste of nothing. If it had tasted of anything they would have suspected it. (*V*, p. 50)

The people play the part but it becomes second nature; like Eliot's typist, they are mechanically going through the motions, yet Anna is still unable to immerse herself fully in this world and the supposedly normal reflections jar with the reality underneath.

This façade is directly followed by references to an advertisement for Bourne's Cocoa: 'What is Purity? For Thirty-five Years the Answer has been Bourne's Cocoa' (*V*, p. 50). The advertisement highlights the commodified and artificial nature of all that surrounds her – a society in which Anna finds herself for sale.¹⁸ Peter Buse *et al* discuss

¹⁸ One need only think of the "Aeolus" section of *Ulysses* and Bloom's 'House of Keys' advertisement – or indeed 'What is a home without/Plumtree's Potted Meat?/Incomplete./With it an abode of bliss.' in "Lotus Eaters" – to understand the importance, resonance and power of advertising not just in the commercial and consumerist world but also in its representation in a literary text. (Joyce, p. 116; p. 72).

Walter Benjamin's perspective on advertising and argue that he diverges from more recent advertising theory which adopt a semiotic approach and sees advertising as 'an arbitrary system of differences. That is to say, there is no "natural" connection between the signifier of advertising (the consumer product) and its signified (wealth, happiness, sexual desirability, sophistication, and so on)'.¹⁹ But, they argue that: 'Nevertheless, advertisements constantly attempt to disguise the arbitrary nature of the bond they establish between product and "lifestyle"' and Benjamin rejects the supposed 'accidental relation' words have to their objects.²⁰ Using the desert setting of an advertisement Benjamin details in the *Arcades Project* for Bullrich Salt,²¹ Buse *et al* claim that 'advertisements tear objects from the "normal" setting and juxtapose them with others'.²² In this way, Bourne's Cocoa is ripped from its drinks aisle setting and transposed to Anna's life placing her as the commodity. Rhys' depiction of advertisements here follows Benjamin's approach – the link is not arbitrary, the 'Purity' highlighted by Bourne's Cocoa directly signifies Anna's purity or lack thereof. If Benjamin groups advertisements with other visual exhibitions 'that puts the object on display',²³ then the recalled image of Bourne's 'Purity' locates Anna's consciousness in a world which is made up of 'objects on display' and a world in which she is one such object.²⁴

¹⁹ Peter Buse, Ken Hirschkop, Scott McCracken & Bertrand Taithe, *Benjamin's Arcades: An unGuided Tour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 115.

²⁰ *Idem*.

²¹ See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland & Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1999), convolute: G1a, sheet: 4.

²² Buse *et al*, p. 113.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 117.

²⁴ Indeed, Richardson depicts the consumerist world of shopping in Regent Street in a mystical and intoxicating way: 'The pavement of heaven. [...] Shops passed by, bright endless caverns screen with glass ... the bright teeth of a grand piano running along the edge of a darkness, a cataract of light pouring down its raised lid; forests of hats; dresses, shining against darkness, bright headless crumpling stalks; sly, silky, ominous furs; metals, cold and clanging, brandishing the light' close prickling fire of jewels ... strange people who bought these things, touch and bought them' (*I*, pp. 416-7). When Miriam stops to inspect the goods on offer in one shop window she is met with 'the tide flowing from the clear window, a soft fresh tide of sunlit colours ... clear green glass shelves laden with shapes of fluted glass, glinting transparencies of mauve and amber and green, rose - pearl and milky blue, welded to a flowing tide, freshening and flowing through her blood, a sea rising and falling with her breathing' (*I*, p. 417). Although utterly consumed by the tide of the spectacle and artifice of the dazzling shop window displays, Miriam is separated from the wealthy

Anna returns to this advertisement when she is wondering what she will tell Hester about her living arrangements, again highlighting the falsities which must be performed to pass through this act; it also links her financial and sexual relationship with Walter to her thoughts of impurity as she repeats the question ‘what is purity’? Hester is not oblivious to Anna’s new situation but would rather continue the façade: ‘don’t imagine that I don’t guess how you’re going on. Only some things must be ignored some things I refuse to be mixed up with I refuse to think about even’ (*V*, p. 55). The reality is ever present but always kept beneath the surface so as to keep the performance going. In Anna’s opinion, Hester’s hands also reflect this duality: ‘Her hands were large with broad palms, but the fingers were long and slender and she was proud of them’ (*V*, p. 51). Whilst the large broad palms are less feminine and less appealing, Hester’s long, slender fingers offer a more desirable display of femininity; it is this “display” that invokes Hester’s pride and reflects her general superficial outlook.

Like Anna’s estimation of Hester’s hands, Laurie’s appearance and her hands are seen, by Anna, as a reflection of her character:

I could see all the lines in [her face], and the powder, trying to fill up the lines, and just where her lipstick stopped and her lips began. It looked like a clown’s face, so that I wanted to laugh at it. She was pretty, but her hands were short and fat with wide, flat, very red nails. (*V*, p. 106)

Here Laurie’s mask of womanliness is clearly visible to Anna, who views it as ridiculous and laughable; but for Laurie, it is necessary – she must paint on her mask both to please the men she is with and to protect her true self. As Riviere argues, the ‘woman’s mask, though transparent to other women, was successful with men, and served its purpose

West-End shoppers – those ‘strange people’ – who are able to afford to touch and consume such inviting commodities. The range of beautiful colours link back to Miriam’s first impression of Newlands and of the Corries, and certainly makes the link between the fashionable Corries and the commodities available in the fashionable West End both of which are unattainable to Miriam – she can look but not touch.

well'.²⁵ Laurie as the “professional tart” is shrewd and knows how to play the men she “picks up”, but Anna is unable to see this necessity and while she finds it intriguingly impressive, she also finds it disgusting. She is nice and pretty but her hands reflect the unsavoury nature of her relationships with men; it is unsavoury in Anna’s eyes because Laurie views it as a business transaction not as romance or love. Just as the lines of her face are concealed and covered by layers of powder, the artifice of Laurie’s ‘very red nails’ denotes the artifice of her character, playing the part of the coquette and playing it well. However, Anna, who finds herself in a similar position to Laurie, is unable to make this transition fully and her own nails reflect this: ‘I looked down at my hands and the nails shone as bright as brass. At least, the left hand did – the right wasn’t so good’ (*V*, p. 17). Here her nails are indicative of her half-move into this constructed realm, halfway between, straddling that which is real and that which is artifice.

On an evening out, Anna finds herself drunk in a hotel room with Laurie and one of the men who accompanied them; struggling to continue this act, Anna becomes argumentative and fights with Laurie over the dress that she had borrowed: ‘The dress was hanging over the end of the bed. I took hold of it, but she hung on to it. We both pulled. Joe started to laugh’ (*V*, p. 108). As Veblen’s and Riviere’s theories intimate, this struggle is about more than just a dress; the dress itself becomes symbolic for the costume of womanliness and superiority – they are struggling to hold onto the dominant position. Unfortunately, Anna’s lack of experience and unwillingness to surrender herself to the accepted artifice puts her at a significant disadvantage to the practised and proficient Laurie who is able to go the distance and easily win the title of dominant female and its accompanying medal – the dress (not to mention the man): ‘Laurie didn’t say anything.

²⁵ Riviere, pp. 217-8.

She kept the dress over her arm' (*V*, p. 108). But obtaining this man does not seem to be a reward for Anna, as, at this point, her main goal is still love. Laurie's adeptness with men, her 'specimens' (*V*, p. 121), is unparalleled by Anna and Laurie is able to reverse the usual gendered power dynamics to which Anna is usually witness. In a brief scene, not more than a few sentences, Laurie's skills and adeptness are highlighted: "My shoe's undone," Laurie said. When he did it up his hands were trembling. ("I can always make people crazy about me")' (*V*, p. 121). Here Laurie effortlessly reduces the man to trembling hands and holds the control firmly in her own red-nailed hands.

A film that Ethel and Anna see at the Camden cinema, *Three-Fingered Kate*,²⁶ epitomises Anna's experience of England; she is missing something. In the cinema, which 'smelt of poor people', Anna associates with the pretty but villainous Three-Fingered Kate and is annoyed when the audience applaud her capture: "Damned fools," I said. "Aren't they damned fools? Don't you hate them? They always clap in the wrong places and laugh in the wrong places'" (*V*, p. 93). The character of Three-Fingered Kate is a wily and shrewd female criminal whose main victims tend to be white males who are in positions of authority and often she leaves her distinctive three-fingered mark as a calling card at the crime scenes. Anna and Kate share many similarities; Gerry Turvey states that like Anna,

²⁶ Actress Ivy Martinek starred in seven films between October 1909 and October 1912 as the eponymous three-fingered Kate: *The Exploits of Three-Fingered Kate* (1909), *Three-Fingered Kate: Her Second Victim, the Art Dealer* (1909), *Three-Fingered Kate: Her Victim the Banker* (1910), *Three-Fingered Kate: The Episode of the Sacred Elephants* (1910), *Three-Fingered Kate: The Wedding Presents* (1912), *Three-Fingered Kate: The Case of the Chemical Fumes* (1912), *Three-Fingered Kate: The Pseudo-Quartette* (1912). The series all co-starred Alice Moseley as Kate's assisting sister, Mary, and were all produced by the British & Colonial Kinematograph Company (B&C). Gerry Turvey argues that: 'B&C's launching of Three-Fingered Kate introduced a format – the film series or film serial – that became a staple for several British production companies throughout the 1910s and 1920s' (Gerry Turvey, 'Three-Fingered Kate: Celebrating Womanly Cunning and Successful Female Criminal Enterprise', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Vol. 17 (2010), pp. 200-1). Five of the films in the series were directed by Ivy's brother Henry Oceano Martinek, with the exceptions of the first directed by J. B. McDowell and the fifth by Charles Raymond. Anna would have watched the fourth installment: *Three-Fingered Kate: The Episode of the Sacred Elephants* (1910), in which Kate is caught (the one and only time) and handcuffed but is up to her usual criminal antics once again in the following three films.

Kate 'is both motherless and fatherless, independent of any parental oversight'.²⁷ Left alone to fend for themselves, both heroines use their cunning to overcome obstacles and gain position in the world. Seen as a trickster, it is easy to see how Anna would associate with the eponymous heroine; as Turvey argues: 'Tricksters are often an underdog and weaker than their opponents, and Kate, of course, is a woman striving to make her own way in a male-dominated society. But tricksters use their intelligence and quick-wittedness to remain in control of a situation'.²⁸ Turvey goes on to argue that: 'Most importantly, tricksters are shapeshifters able to transform their appearance. [...] This capacity is integral to Kate's persona too, taking the form of a facility for disguise'.²⁹ This again corresponds with Anna's own shifting identity. Indeed, like Anna, 'Kate is not folklore's Robin Hood robbing the rich to give to the poor but, rather, a self-interested opportunist seeking her own material gain'.³⁰ Like Anna's own otherness, the actress Ivy Martinek was born in France and travelled throughout Europe, America and Asia and joined the circus when she was only six years old. She is placed, distinctly and physically, as an "other" which is most likely the cause behind the white British negative and xenophobic reaction of Anna's fellow film goers: 'that girl who did Three-Fingered Kate was a foreigner [...] Couldn't they have got an English girl to do it? It was just because she had this soft, dirty way that foreign girls have' (*V*, p. 94). It is Kate's otherness, her transgressions of the law and her specifically *female* insubordination which endear her to Anna and she connects with the marginalised protagonist of this film since she too feels as if she has lost something. There is something absent and incomplete about her current life in England compared to her full life in the West Indies. Life in England is a far cry from the dream of her childhood home in which she felt emotionally and physically complete when compared to her association

²⁷ Gerry Turvey, 'Three-Fingered Kate: Celebrating Womanly Cunning and Successful Female Criminal Enterprise', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Vol. 17 (2010), p. 207.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 204.

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 206.

with Three-Fingered Kate: ‘I’d know for certain that it had started again my lovely life – like a *five-finger* exercise played very slowly on the piano’ (*V*, p. 115, my emphasis).

The Final Act

The men in this novel all handle women in a similar fashion, as if it is prescriptive; Anna’s first exchanges with Carl exemplify this. After stating how he dislikes Englishwomen’s dresses, and perhaps fears some rebuttal from Anna, he simply avoids any potential upset, just as Walter did: ‘He put his hand on mine and smiled. He had very nice teeth’ (*V*, p. 102). Unaware of this subtle control, Anna is once again duped into admiring the man. By taking hold of Anna’s hand, Carl is able to take hold of her emotions and change what could have been an unpleasant exchange from his rudeness to that of admiration. The other man in this group, Joe, re-enacts this controlling gesture as he sits in the taxi holding both Anna’s and Laurie’s hands and offers an excuse as to why Carl has left, an excuse which is clearly fabricated. In a scene reminiscent of Mansfield’s “A Dill Pickle”, with the unnamed lover stroking the protagonist’s glove as a means of placating her (‘she watched him draw her glove through his fingers, gently, gently, her anger really did die down’³¹), Joe later takes hold of Anna’s hand and strokes it, but she pre-empts his comments by saying: ‘I know what you’re going to say. You’re going to say it’s cold and clammy. Well, it’s because I was born in the West Indies and I’m always like that’ (*V*, pp. 106-7). Anna’s intoxication at this point renders her unable to play the part of an admiring female and she bypasses any of the usual niceties by clearly stating that she knows her hands are cold and directly places herself as the ‘other’ coming from the West Indies. In doing this she is able to use her cultural difference as a protective shield rather than as something that people can use against her and so marks her attempt to assert some agency.

³¹ Katherine Mansfield, “A Dill Pickle” in *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Constable & Company, 1953), p. 173.

Even though Anna begins to take control herself, she is still bound by Walter with whom she remains in love. She has a physical binding in the way of a bracelet, perhaps not the adornment in the form of a wedding ring which she desired, but a binding one nonetheless: ‘I had on the jade bracelet that Walter had given me, and I slid it down over my hand. It felt warm and comforting against my hand’ (*V*, p. 126). In the absence of Walter’s hand, this bracelet continues to hold her and acts as a materialisation of the absent lover.³² It also acts as a protective talisman: ‘I was holding my bracelet like that, slipped down over my hand. It felt warm and comforting because I knew I could hit somebody pretty hard with it. [...] A man spoke to me out of the side of his mouth, like they do, but he went on quickly, before I could hit him’ (*V*, p. 126). The bracelet, if read as Walter’s presence, offers security, warmth and comfort but is also as a weapon capable of warding off other men’s advances. Therefore, if Walter were still in her life, she would not have to worry about money, security, or other men – indeed all of her current worries.

Ironically, Anna’s new found position with Ethel is that of a manicurist; it is now her turn to take control of others’ hands. Being able to please a man in this way is apparently no trouble according to Ethel: ‘It’s awfully easy. Don’t be silly, anybody can do it’ (*V*, p. 120). Unfortunately, for Anna it doesn’t come quite so easily as she is usually on the receiving end of being “handled” and has some difficulty switching positions. When Carl arrives at Ethel’s for a manicure from Anna, her lack of skill is evidenced by her unsteady hands: ‘I started to file his nails, but my hands were trembling and the file kept slipping’ (*V*, p. 130). Unlike Laurie who is able to take control of situations with men, it is Anna who has the trembling hands and Carl who is still in control: ‘he took my hand in

³² Like the glove to which Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones refer in their article ‘Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe’ (*Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2001, pp. 114-132), Rhys’ glove could easily be exchanged for the bracelet in this scenario as both adornments possess the same qualities – that of evoking the presence of the absent lover.

both of his and warmed it' (*V*, p. 131). It appears that Anna is more comfortable with this division of power and allows Carl to continue; or perhaps more accurately, this is the unequal division of power to which she has become accustomed.

For a fleeting moment, though still grappling with what is reality and what is a dream, Anna sees some light in this dark world:

Sometimes not being able to get over the feeling that it was a dream. The light and the sky and the shadows and the houses and the people – all part of the dream, all fitting in and all against me. But there were other times when a fine day, or music, or looking in the glass and think I was pretty, made me start again imagining that was nothing I couldn't do, nothing I couldn't become. (*V*, p. 134)

However, this feeling of hope directly stems from her relationship with men; this time with Carl, and the hope that he will take her away from this life: 'Imagining Carl would say, "When I leave London, I'm going to take you with me"' (*V*, p. 134). She is still unable to separate the performance – a romantic affair – from the reality: Carl is married, has a child and is only looking for some distraction whilst he is away, indeed a distraction for which he pays. After Carl leaves her life, she has a flurry of other men; however, these are not romantic affairs but a number of clients, by one of whom she becomes pregnant. When she realises that she is pregnant, she again returns to the safety of her childhood as a method of coping and her thoughts and the narrative become fragmented; moving, once again, incoherently from her bedroom in Ethel's flat to Miss Jackson's French lessons in the West Indies. In doing this, Anna is able to dissociate from the reality of her unsettling situation and find some comfort in the life she lost. But her happy memory soon turns sour as her thoughts move to things more sinister, that of Obeah and a West Indian sorceress: 'Anne Chewett used to say that it's haunted and obeah – she had been in gaol for obeah (obeah-women who dig up dead people and cut their fingers off and go to gaol for it – it's the hands that are obeah)' (*V*, p. 139). Markedly, it is the hands which are invested with the

power of Obeah and can present a menacing threat. Obeah would have been present in Rhys' consciousness from her own life in the Caribbean and indeed it features in more than just *Voyage in the Dark*, as Christophine is a practicing Obeah in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. This connection is also made by Sue Thomas, who finds further references in an early version of Rhys' "Pioneers, Oh Pioneers", where Mrs Cox, a white Creole, "had driven out the last obeah-man" and significantly connects the otherworldly practice with the hands: "There were hands," she said, "cut off dead people, hanging all over his room. It's hands are obeah. [sic]".³³ This links back to the mystical hand found in *Ulysses* and, again, reaffirms the association between power (good or bad) and hands. Anna's thoughts of Obeah continue as she recalls: 'Obeah zombis soucrians [...] you know them in the day-time – they look like people but their eyes are red and staring and they're soucrians at night' (*V*, pp. 139-40). Here Anna's dislike of disguises and masks is seen in an exaggerated sense; the soucrians (vampiric witches in folklore) wear the mask of someone familiar but underneath are something altogether more threatening.³⁴ It is now when Anna's past (happiness) starts to blur with her present (unhappiness) that the fragments of her self become so scattered and confused that they overlap and converge, allowing for no clear separation of "good" fragment from "bad" fragment.

When Anna leaves her residence with Ethel, Laurie's aptitude in performance is, once again, seen to be superior to Anna's; however, this time the difference is that Laurie's act works not only on men, but on Ethel too. In a letter written to Laurie after Anna has left her flat, Ethel complains that: 'when I asked Anna to come and live with me I did not

³³ Add Mss 57859, folio 2 quoted in Sue Thomas, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 166.

³⁴ Soucrians are also seen in Rhys' short story, "They Day They Burned the Books": 'Mildred told the other servants in the town that her eyes had gone wicked, like a souciant's eyes, and that afterwards she had picked up some of the hair he pulled out and put it in an envelope, and that Mr. Sawyer ought to look out (hair is obeah as well as hands).' ("The Day They Burned the Books" in *Tigers are Better-Looking* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972), p. 38).

know what sort of a girl she was and she is a very deceiving girl' (*V*, p. 143). After a continuing tirade of insults about Anna, she goes on to praise Laurie: 'I cannot bear to think that she will come to you like that because you are the sort of girl I think a lot of' (*V*, p. 143). Even though Anna has learnt some skills from Laurie, she has not learnt the subtleties of performance and once again Laurie's performance wins out and Anna's comes unstuck. Anna takes Laurie's advice, reverting to the aid of a man and calls upon Walter to help her out in her predicament but it is his right-hand man, Vincent, who is sent. Almost instantly, Anna is transported back to the powerless character she was with Walter: "All right; you shall have the money. Don't fash yourself; don't be miserable any more." He took my hand and patted it' (*V*, p. 146). Once again, she is handled into submission and this predicament is quietly swept away with the provision of money.

After her near-fatal abortion, Anna is transported back to the West Indies, fittingly during the three day Masquerade. The young Anna overhears her father talking about masks: '*a mask Father said with an idiot behind it I believe the whole damned business is like that*' (*V*, p. 156, original emphasis). Her father's statement regarding the fact that the whole world wore masks is something that has stayed firmly with Anna, extending into her adult life and is perhaps the reason she finds it so hard to don a mask successfully herself. In Riviere's (and, indeed, Butler's) terms, this places Anna in a difficult bind: to be socially stable she has to act out the masquerade of femininity/womanliness but equally she wishes to please her father and avoid condemnation which leaves her in a precarious and oscillating situation of trying to perform her role for both sides but, ultimately, being unable to be successful in either situation. Interestingly, while the men wear obvious '*crude pink masks*' (*V*, p. 156) the women present in this Masquerade wear masks which were more insidiously horrifying:

the masks the women wore were made of close-meshed wire covering the whole face and tied at the back of the head – the handkerchief that went over the back of the head hid the strings and over the slits for the eyes mild blue eyes were painted then there was a small straight nose and a little red heart-shaped mouth and under the mouth another slit so that they could put their tongues out at you. (V, p. 157, original emphasis)

Are these not the masks of the women whom Anna knows? Are these not the masks which Anna finds difficulty in wearing? The masks certainly work well to disguise and fully cover that which is underneath: even the “strings” which tie them are concealed, just as any hint of truth or weakness should be concealed in a successful mask in Anna’s social milieu. The painted ‘mild blue eyes’ and ‘red heart-shaped mouths’ mirror the painted faces of the women in her English social circle, such as Laurie, and highlight Anna’s dislike of this artifice which crosses both the West Indian and the London masquerade.



The cross-over of these fragments, past and present, finally works to give Anna more clarity; instead of completely dissociating herself from her current situation, this echo from her past informs her present and she is able to understand the women around her and what is expected of her by returning to the roots of her happy West Indian childhood. In this way the separate fragments are not abstract, they have greater meaning in the whole; it is through their intersection that they are able to inform, influence and equip Anna with greater understanding of her position and her role in this social performance. The final lines of the novel highlight the perpetual nature of the performativity of the world in which Anna finds herself and brings the story full circle to its opening lines: ‘And about starting all over again, all over again ...’ (V, p. 159). However, this is not the hope of starting a new life, a fresh beginning, of Anna finally achieving the realisation of her theatrical life

and the part she must play in it. The performance must continue; when the curtain falls it is not on the show but on one act and another act will start all over again, all over again.

Here we have followed Anna's journey from her unwilling entrance into the sexual marketplace highlighted by her 'cold and rather clammy' (*V*, p. 12) hands to her attempting to gain a sense of agency through the violent action of stubbing out her cigarette on Walter's hand. What has been paramount throughout Anna's journey is performativity, not just her own but also of those around her and the analysis of the hands depicted has permitted a new exploration and a different interpretation of modernist fragmentation and performativity. As with the other modernist texts, reading the representation of hands in *Voyage in the Dark* through the approach of theoretical partialism allows for a more nuanced understanding of the characters, their fragmentation, their performativity, their constructed identities and, indeed, the novel as a whole.

Part III

**‘I hold it out to you – my terrified heart – in
my two hands’**

PART III: INTRODUCTION

Building on the foundations of the previously explored theoretical framework, analysis and application across the differing modernist texts which were set out in Part I and II, Part III of the thesis aims to develop a new reading of *Pilgrimage*. It attempts to trace, keep up and evolve with Miriam's ever-changing gendered identity and to do so it will focus on one common theme: her romantic relationships. The initial conceptual groundwork is laid out with an exploration into her exposure to the marriage market and her own position within it. This then leads on to three key readings: her relationships with Michael, Hypo and Amabel.

In *Pilgrimage*, Richardson moves away from the traditional treatment of the romance plot and into an oeuvre indicative of New Woman fiction, where marriage is used as a device to address wider social concerns and to question the sociocultural norm. Kathy Psomiades shows how these 'self-reflective' novels address such concerns:

Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, George Meredith, the New Woman Novelists of the 1890s, all draw upon the anthropological idea of marriage's relation to primitive social organization. [...] the liberal progress narrative's language of tyranny and consent characterizes the narrative of marital cruelty, making clear its role as an analogue for larger questions of legitimate rule.¹

At a time when women's social, political, legal and career opportunities were still limited, the predominant option was marriage; however, *Pilgrimage*, as part of Psomiades' grouping, sees Miriam searching for alternative options as she is unhappy with the patriarchal institution of 'Victorian marriage law, which folded women into their

¹ Kathy Alexis Psomiades, 'The Marriage Plot in Theory', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2010), p. 55.

husbands' legal identities under coverture'.² Richardson questions the critical models of marriage, but this raises the question of how to read *Pilgrimage*. Richardson's narrative mode allows her to explore and to question the options available to women at this time, ultimately asking – is marriage really the only viable option? As discussed in the Introduction, Part III of this thesis will propose that Richardson does indeed revisit and revise the conventional models available to women at this time. By returning to the idea that Richardson was a theorist *avant la lettre*, Part III will illustrate how Richardson offers, via her critique, alternative possibilities for women.

Pilgrimage also centres on the self in relation to social concerns; but what does it say about Miriam, about her position in society, her own social and gendered identity? Richardson explores these questions by refocusing not just on the microcosm of society looking inwards or on the macrocosm looking outwards but on the interchange between the two. In doing so, she offers a more nuanced interpretation of the lived experience of women and how this affects the understanding of the self. From the 1880s a change in the workforce was seen as more women moved into previously male dominated spheres of work (as seen in Part I) and other opportunities once forbidden were now open to them as the “white-blouse” revolution began. Therefore, the institution of marriage becomes a useful medium for discussing this societal change. But before this opportunity arises for Miriam and she gains a sense of fulfilment from her life in London (indeed, Miriam often refers to London as the “ultimate lover” who expects nothing from her: ‘What lover did she want? No one in the world would oust this *mighty lover*, always receiving her back without words, engulfing and leaving her untouched, liberated and expanding to the whole

² Ibid.

range of her being'³), she is subject to a more traditional perspective on life, one in which girls are simply required to marry. It is this early stage of Miriam's initial explorations into the marriage market which will be the focus of the first section of Part III.

Part III then moves on to three close readings, the first being Miriam's relationship with Michael. This section will explore the problem of understanding concepts of the self and of biology in *Pilgrimage* – are they mutually exclusive or intertwined? What also becomes apparent is Miriam's negotiation of racial assumptions and prejudices as she attempts to define her own "Englishness". Drawing on the work of Maren Linett, Jacqueline Rose and Jean Radford, I will explore the representation and reaction to Michael's "Jewishness" and how his role as other both attracts and repels Miriam. National and racial identity play a key part in Miriam's gendered identity and Michael often takes on an oppositional role as she develops her feminine consciousness against his racial determinism and praise of the procreative "Woman". In order to explore their relationship and unpack the gender, biological and racial connotations evident in the text, it will be read in terms of their haptic connection; building on the work of Abbie Garrington, this section posits a new reading of the haptic relationship in *Pilgrimage*.

The second of the three readings is Miriam's relationship to 'the big man',⁴ Hypo Wilson. What is paramount to their relationship, and to this section of the thesis, is their intellectual connection. Moving away from the haptic connection, Hypo introduces Miriam to a new literary arena which allows her to develop her own aesthetic, however, whether this is gained through his influence or against it is worth further consideration. Overall this chapter tends to agree with the argument put forward by Deborah Parsons which suggests

³ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage III* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 272, my emphasis.

⁴ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage III* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 262.

that it is the latter. Not only is this an important relationship for Miriam's literary ambitions, it also sees the next stage of the development of her femininity and allows her to articulate more sophisticated ideas. What is significant in this relationship is that, although it moves away from the previously seen haptic connection, it is the only relationship which explicitly details sex. Therefore, their sexual relationship will also be subject to enquiry in order to explore how this physicality influences her feminine subjectivity. The social performances she witnesses at the Wilsons are explored and can be related back to those that were seen in the first section of Part III relating to marriage. Again, Miriam's negotiation of this social terrain will be explored so as to map her progression to becoming a more independent woman. Whether Hypo is regarded as her literary "father figure" or not, what becomes apparent is that he plays an important role in the construction and the sharpening of her feminine literary aesthetic.

The last of the readings is focused on Miriam and Amabel and this sees the culmination of the development of Miriam's feminine subjectivity. What is persistent throughout *Pilgrimage* is the reference to Miriam's uncertain gendered identity. Drawing on the work of Joanne Winning, this section seeks to place the scattered 'dual' and 'amphibious' gender references as a precursor to the later, more nuanced understanding of Miriam's gendered identity. Reading Miriam's and Amabel's relationship through Lacan's theory of the mirror stage and in context of Freud's *On Narcissism*, this section aims to illuminate the developmental qualities of their relationship and how Miriam's lesbian romance differs from the two previously detailed heterosexual relationships. Lacan's theory also informs the proposition that Amabel enables Miriam to gain a greater insight into her own feminine subjectivity as she moves away from the influence of the 'great men'. We are returned to Garrington's suggestion of a haptic reading of *Pilgrimage*, as

Amabel offers Miriam the possibility of a haptic reconnection, which was last seen with Michael. This reading then facilitates a new understanding of Miriam's role in the union of Michael and Amabel.

Part III seeks to explore Miriam's relationship to her own evolving gendered identity and how this is influenced by her relationship to others. Through these relationships I aim to show how she crafts a new concept of femininity and is able to articulate a more sophisticated understanding of her feminine consciousness which is not fixed or binary. Therefore, Part III implements the previously explored theoretical partialism in relation to an analysis of *Pilgrimage* and offers a newly developed understanding of three aspects of Miriam's feminine identity: her own subjectivity as a woman; her feminine consciousness and her feminine literary aesthetic.

HER HAND IN MARRIAGE: REPRESENTATIONS OF MARRIAGE IN PILGRIMAGE VOLUME I

Handfast: ‘To make a contract of marriage between (parties) by joining hands; to betroth (two persons, or one person *to* another).’¹

The hand has long been associated with marriage; from asking for a hand in marriage to being the site of the symbolic representation – the wedding ring. Historically the term “handfasting” was an equivalent to common-law marriage which was first practised in Britain.² It is not only the hand but also the fourth digit in particular – the ring finger or annulus – which is associated with marital status. John Manning makes this connection, claiming that ‘the Egyptians believed a delicate nerve ran from the fourth finger of the left hand to the heart [...] so what better finger on which to wear a wedding ring’.³ Manning goes on to quote Henry Swinburne’s 1680 work *Treatise of Spousals* which claims that anatomists ‘had found a vein rather than a nerve, the *vena amoris*, which passes from the ring finger to the heart’.⁴ Either way it moves away from pure symbolism and gives the weight of anatomical reasoning behind the connection between the hand, the ring finger and matters of the heart.

¹ OED, original emphasis.

² Usually performed by the lower classes, handfasting served to unite a couple without the need of an officiant or official records. It was made illegal in England in 1753 with Lord Hardwicke’s ‘An Act for the Better Preventing of Clandestine Marriage’, which forbade this type of common-law marriage; yet it held a longer tradition in Scotland where it was still practiced up until 1939 when the Marriage (Scotland) Act of 1939 abolished “irregular marriages” stating that marriages must be conducted by either a minister or a registrar. The higher classes used the term to denote ‘betrothal’ (‘to betrothe by joining hands, in order to cohabitation, before the celebration of marriage’ (J. Jamieson, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, 1st ed., 1808 (2 vols.) in Oxford English Dictionary)), which served as what is now known as an engagement where the couples would be handfasted with the intention of marrying in the near future. Handfasting was an idea also used to denote trial marriages where a couple would be united for traditionally a year and a day, after which if no children were born then the couple could separate or decide to be married by a clergyman (See Kendra Vaughan Hovey, *Handfasting: A Pagan Guide to Commitment Rituals* (Massachusetts: F&W Publications Inc., 2008)). It is also a custom associated with Paganism and handfasting ceremonies are still practiced today where the couple join hands, left with left, right with right, and a cord or ribbon is tied around the hands as a symbol that all parts of the couple are now joined. See Raven Kaldera & Tannin Schwartzstein, *Handfasting and Wedding Rituals* (Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2003).

³ John Manning, *The Finger Book* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2008), p. 112.

⁴ Idem, original emphasis.

Aside from its historical background, marriage also has its place in economic exchange and this is not a new capitalist venture. From the age-old dowry system to exchanges in trade and land which marriages enabled, the institution has been used to secure social positions whether it is in terms of finance or of power, and in exchange the man is provided with a wife and the promise of children. In sociocultural terms, the principles of this have not changed dramatically but they have been re-branded, so to speak. In its Victorian incarnation, marriage came to represent purity: the wife was symbolic of the home, the private sphere and motherhood and this was seen as the telos of a woman; being a wife was a performed role which ensured respectability for the family in society. Phillip Vannini discusses the performative and latterly commodified nature of marriage: it ‘moved, for example, from a courtly idea of love as painful longing and idolization to the expression of spiritual purity typical of the Victorian era’.⁵ Whilst concentrating on more contemporary times, Vannini argues that marriage proposals, marriage and indeed romance itself are subject to consumerism: ‘the romanticization of commodities and the commodification of romance [...] Beside self-expression, romance allowed those who have learned how to consume it properly to feel liberated from the drudgery of work’.⁶ This is a concept which can be seen in *Pilgrimage*; Miriam, for example, is often disenchanted with her work life and indulging in the idea of a romance and possibility of marriage would certainly elevate her from the drudgery of work. However, to be able to move away from mere indulgent fantasy she is required to perform the functions of a commodity and learn how to “consume” properly.

This view places marriage firmly in commodity/consumer culture, in which a marriage is not simply about the romantic joining of two people – purely for love – but

⁵ Phillip Vannini, ‘Will You Marry Me?: Spectacle and Consumption in the Ritual of Marriage Proposals’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2004), p. 171.

⁶ Idem.

about what it offers: financial security, children, and outward expressions of one's status in society (neatly provided by the presence of engagement and wedding rings). The performativity found in the marriage market then becomes a useful tool in securing the most desirable position. If, as Vannini argues, 'interaction [is] a performance that is inevitably shaped by the greater sociocultural environment in which it is enmeshed and by the audience present',⁷ then the presence of the engagement or wedding ring becomes symbolic of one's success in this type of performance: not only for having succeeded in securing a partner but also for having succeeded in securing the most desirable position – that of a married woman. But this is where Miriam comes unstuck as she is neither able to “perform” correctly nor is she really certain that being a married woman is, in fact, the most desirable position for her. Like many of Miriam's other opinions, her thoughts on marriage are altogether changeable. She moves from seeing it as a form of safety, envying her sisters' newly found security within the bonds of matrimony, to utterly disliking the marriage as a form of bondage and therefore the men themselves. In this respect, Miriam possesses a fractured identity; she is still part of her traditional upbringing but not fully invested in it, yet also not fully developed as a New Woman. She straddles two lives, but is not completely happy with either. What is evident throughout *Pilgrimage* is that Richardson questions the heteronormativity of the conventional routes open to women; as Jennifer Cooke argues: 'The female lifespan in the world Miriam inhabits – grow up, get married, have children, grow old, die – is a heteronormative model which she rejects, at first through financial necessity and later through conscious choice and the exercise of hard-won autonomy'.⁸ Therefore, what can be seen, through Miriam's development in the early novel-chapters of *Pilgrimage*, is Richardson's critique of conventional models of marriage and the life choices available to women which then moves on, in later novel-

⁷ Ibid, p. 174.

⁸ Jennifer Cooke, 'Dorothy Richardson, Queer Theorist', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 4 (2012), p. 23.

chapters, and sees Miriam developing and honing a new feminine perspective which will allow for fulfilment outside the traditional bonds of matrimony.

Émile Durkheim offers more controversial thoughts on the institution of marriage and women's role within it, thoughts which are more akin to those Miriam possesses. Following the standard contemporary view that women are more bodily-orientated and instinctive when compared to the intellectually-centred male, he argues: 'Being a more instinctive creature than man, woman has only to follow her instincts to find calmness and peace. She thus does not require so strict a social regulation as marriage, and particularly as monogamic marriage'.⁹ But, what is key here is Durkheim's recognition that marriage is not necessarily the best option for women; this certainly goes against the traditional view, as highlighted by Janet Fink and Katherine Holden, whereby the 'gendered nature of the British marriage contract...operated to contain women's sexuality and reproduction'.¹⁰ Durkheim goes further to identify this constricting disadvantage for women and the double standard found in marriage:

Custom, moreover, grants him certain privileges which allow him in some measure to lessen the strictness of the regime. There is no compensation or relief for the woman. Monogamy is strictly obligatory for her. . . . The regulation therefore is a restraint to her without any great advantages.¹¹

This highlights the restricting nature of marriage to which Miriam is opposed; while the man is able to enjoy a somewhat more relaxed regime, the woman is obliged to uphold it at all times. Edward Tiryakian succinctly summarises Durkheim's controversial theories:

Even more radical is his conclusion that although marriage and its function are seen as a sacrifice of man of his 'polygamous instincts,' in fact (or in the light of

⁹ Émile Durkheim, *Suicide* (New York: Free Press, [1897]1963), p. 272.

¹⁰ Janet Fink & Katherine Holden, 'Pictures from the Margins of Marriage: Representations of Spinsters and Single Mothers in the mid-Victorian Novel, Inter-war Hollywood Melodrama and British Film of the 1950s and 1960s', *Gender and History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1999), p. 233.

¹¹ Durkheim, p. 272.

sociological analysis), it is man who benefits more from marriage than woman, and by accepting monogamy, 'it was she who made a sacrifice'.¹²

Durkheim's view is important when considering Miriam's position, as she too is at odds with the "tradition" of marriage and contemplates exactly what advantages it offers her when compared with the possibility of an enlightening, self-exploratory, solitary journey. Indeed it is this question which Miriam ponders throughout *Volume I* and arguably throughout the whole of the novel-cycle.

Initial Thoughts

Miriam's thoughts on marriage are often sparked by listening to others' conversations, from her sisters to the young girls she teaches both in Germany and North London. One of the first examples given in *Pointed Roofs* is in relation to the German girls who, to Miriam, seem to have their futures planned out:

What they were going to do with their lives was only plain [...] And they were placid and serene, secure in a kind of security Miriam had never met before. They did not seem to be in the least afraid of the future. She envied that. Their eyes and their hands were serene. ... They would have houses and things they could do and understand, always. [...]

She thought of their comfortable German homes, of ruling and shopping and directing and being looked up to. ... German husbands.
That thought she shirked.¹³

This illustrates the duality of Miriam's feelings towards marriage: while she can appreciate the security found in such a life and is envious of it, she cannot factor in the role of the husband; even at this early stage it is an idea that she shirks. What is also gained from the serene depiction of the girls' hands is security and knowledge – the girls know what their future will entail and they will be accomplished at it; Miriam is 'astounded to discover, [they] had already a complete outfit of house-linen to which they were now adding fine

¹² Edward A. Tiryakian, 'Sexual Anomie, Social Structure, Societal Change', *Social Forces*, Vol. 59 No. 4 (1981), p. 1030.

¹³ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 82. All subsequent references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *I*.

embroideries and laces. All could cook' (*I*, p. 82). Unlike Miriam, these girls are already domesticated and ready for their future roles as wives; their hands are already taking up the mantle, busily employed by cooking and working to add embellishments and finery to an already certain future. Miriam does not have these hands or their abilities; her hands are not serene as she is she not certain of her role nor does she feel that they hold control over a certain, prescribed future. Yet, what Miriam does not realise at this stage, is that the control is actually in *her* hands; she does not have to surrender to a "traditional" future and place herself in the hands of her husband: she can and will venture out – alone but independent.

Later, when overhearing another conversation between the girls at the Perne's school, Miriam is returned to the idea of marriage and shocked by one of the girls, Jessie Wheeler's 'extraordinary idea' of wanting lots of children: "'Kids are jolly. A1. I hope I have lots' [...] 'Hope your husband'll think so too, my dear'" said Polly, getting up. "Oh, of course, I should only have them if the fellow wanted me to'" (*I*, p. 251). This reaffirms Miriam's dislike of the unequal nature of marriage and reflects Durkheim's theory of woman's 'sacrifice' in marriage; these young girls, excited and eager to find a husband ("'Fancy never having a fellow. I should go off my nut'" (*I*, p. 251)), are bound for a life of putting aside their own desires, acquiescing to their husbands and doing only what the 'fellow wanted them to' – a dutiful role which is completely incompatible with Miriam's standpoint.

The first glimpse of marriage for the Henderson sisters is seen when Miriam receives the letter from Eve, telling of Harriett's engagement. Harriett had asked Eve to write as 'she does not like to write about it herself' (*I*, p. 179), indicating that she is shy

and uncertain of Miriam's reaction. But Miriam reads the letter with 'steady hands' (*I*, p. 179):

regularly in the seat behind us at All Saints' for months – saw her with the Pooles at a concert at the Assembly Rooms and made up his mind then – the moment he saw her – joined the tennis-club – they won the doubles handicap – a beautiful Slazenger racquet – only just over sixteen – for years – of course Mother says it's just foolish nonsense – but I'm not sure that she really thinks so – Gerald took me into his confidence – made a solemn call – *admirably* suited to each other – rather a long melancholy good-looking face – they look such a contrast [...] of course Harry could not let you come without knowing [...] hardly any strawberries – we shall see you soon – everybody sends. (*I*, p. 180, original emphasis)

After rapidly absorbing the information, Miriam is left in a state of confusion and the text's fractured form, which starts with long sentences and moves to very short sentences, reflects her disjointed state of mind. As she sits with the girls in the German school, her thoughts move incoherently. One moment: 'She hardly knew them. She passed half-blindly amongst them' (*I*, p. 180). But this quickly reverses: 'She knew every line of each of them. They were her old friends. They knew her' (*I*, p. 180). When her confusion subsides, she makes her final effort to remove herself emotionally (and imminently physically) from this stifling school and these girls as she realises that she is 'English and free. She had nothing to do with this German School' (*I*, pp. 180-1). In this way, Harriett's engagement offers hope, but with it also comes uncertainty.

When the evening arrives for Miriam to leave the school, her steadfastness is dissipating and this is evidenced in the appearance of her hands: her once 'steady hands' become 'large and shaky' (*I*, p. 183) and reflect the uncertainty of her future. Harriett's engagement, which had originally been a source of boasting to the other girls and a reason for leaving ('Well you see there are all sorts of things happening at home. I *must* go. One of my sisters is engaged' (*I*, p. 182)), now has new connotations which leave Miriam feeling inadequate:

Hurriedly and desolately she packed her bag. She was going home *empty-handed*. She had achieved nothing. Fraulein had made not the slightest effort to keep her. She was just nothing again – with her Saratoga trunk and her hand-bag. *Harriett had achieved*. Harriett. She was just going home with nothing to say for herself. (*I*, pp. 183-4, my emphasis)

So while this stresses Miriam's own sense of failure, it also shows how the concept of marriage is regarded highly in her opinion. 'Harriett had achieved': finding a husband, engagement and marriage is a definite achievement. Unfortunately, in such a time and in her own opinion, Miriam's personal journey of finding a position, travelling to a different country alone, working and being respected in the workplace is certainly not an achievement. The phrase "empty-handed" also gains significance here: Miriam is literally travelling home empty-handed; there is no ring adorning her hand; she brings with her no future prospects comparable to those of Harriett.

On her journey away from the school the once austere Fräulein Pfaff is softened, and Miriam begins to regard her as an equal and thinks: 'Poor Fräulein Pfaff, getting old' (*I*, p. 184). One moment in particular changes the dynamics of their relationship: 'Presently Fräulein laid her gloved hand on Miriam's gloved one. "You and I have, I think, much in common." Miriam froze' (*I*, p. 184). This tender gesture of touching hands (though still with the protective barrier of gloves) offered by Fräulein moves her from the domineering school mistress and places her in a more familial, comforting role; but she also likens Miriam to herself, which clearly Miriam finds disconcerting – is she to have a life akin to Fräulein's? After this shared moment, Miriam assumes a more childlike role and allows Fräulein to adopt a motherly position: 'There was something to pay. She handed her purse to Fräulein'; 'Fräulein gently propelled her up the three steps into a compartment'; 'Fräulein, standing on the top step, pressed both her hands and murmured words of farewell' (*I*, p. 184). In each of these moments, Miriam figuratively and literally hands

over control to Fräulein as a child would to a parent; gone are Miriam's strong, steady, self-assured hands yet she is still not able to reciprocate Fräulein's softened gestures, and instead offers a final: "“Goodbye, Fräulein,” she said stiffly, shaking hands' (*I*, p. 184). So as the German train platform and the novel-chapter *Pointed Roofs* disappear, Miriam is left dejected by Harriett's success; instead she is left to contemplate her newly found similarity to the tall, stern and, most importantly, the *old maid* Fräulein.

Miriam's Suitors

As we saw in Rhys' *Anna*, Miriam, too, has different parts to herself, a sense of a fragmented self. We see her trying to reconcile herself to different, socially-defined expectations throughout the whole of *Pilgrimage* and especially in the first volume we see Miriam attempt to act different parts, as a means of finding out which one 'fits'. During this time there is a duality to Miriam's opinions as she tries to define her own position. Part of her wishes to believe in the concept of traditional marriage, it is what she has been brought up to think and, of course, is a social expectation – a woman of a certain age must be married, have children and be "kept". But the other part of Miriam does not believe the division of the sexes to be equal, especially within the institution of marriage, has problems blindly accepting traditional theories and concepts (such as religion or, more correctly, the doctrine of a man: 'I'm certainly not going to give my mind up to a parson for him to do what he likes with' (*I*, p. 258)) and does not want to have children. It is this second part which prevents her from fully believing in marriage, and prompts her to seek for an alternative. This is an internal and external quest with which Miriam battles, arguably, throughout the whole of *Pilgrimage*; but what is found in *Volume I* is her initial search for a lifestyle, a relationship which will fulfil every part of her.

Upon returning home from Germany, Miriam's involvement with her sister's upcoming nuptials moves haphazardly between admiration and annoyance. At the dance that the Henderson girls hold, Miriam has the opportunity to "perform" the role of a romantic lead. She is waiting for the arrival of her potential beau, Ted; but, his lateness and the thought of her being potentially "stood up", leads her to consider other successful couples, namely Harriett and Gerald:

Presently she would be cold and sick and done for, for the evening. She played on, harking back to the memory of the kindly challenge in the eyes of her brother-in-law to be, dancing gravely with a grave Harriett – fearing her ... writing in her album:

She was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts –
Which terminated all.
... cold, calm little Harriett. (*I*, p. 217)

Her fear of Ted not attending, which Miriam reads as an indication of her problematic position in the marriage market, brings about all her telltale signs of uneasiness: she becomes cold, her 'muscles were somehow stiffening' (*I*, p. 216), and her thoughts turn to the negative. While on the one hand her estimation of the couple is that Gerald is lovingly consumed by his romance with Harriett, on the other hand this consuming nature Miriam views as stifling and finite; it does not allow for more, it starts and concludes with them – it 'terminates all'. The words chosen are not joyful, they are sensible and serious: 'challenge', 'grave', 'fear', 'cold' and 'calm' – this does not give the impression of a young couple in love but of her younger sister about to embark on a serious adult life. But is it Harriett or Miriam who is not ready for this? Finally Ted arrives – Ted, about whom Miriam 'had shown Mademoiselle the names in her birthday-book and dwelt on one page and let Mademoiselle understand that it was *the* page – brown eyes – *les yeux bruns foncés*' (*I*, p. 182, original emphasis), and who makes her hands not large, cold and awkward as we usually see, but 'heavy with happiness and quickened with the sense of Ted's touch upon her arm' (*I*, p. 218). But, unfortunately, Miriam's conduct, her

performance, with her potential suitor at this dance leaves much to be desired; the pair's tryst quickly comes unstuck by Ted's own companion, Max Sonnenheim, as Miriam is swept up by Max, an intriguingly 'strange man' (*I*, p. 219). The 'dear, dear' (*I*, p. 220) Ted is unable to rival Max's exotic charm and fails as a suitor as Max, literally, waltzes Miriam away from him.

Adopting a role which is unusual for Miriam, one more similar to, say, the more flirtatious Nan Babington, she coquettishly indulges Max during the dance. With a new sense of excitement Miriam feels confident and bold with Max and uses him to assert her desirability before Ted: 'Once more from the strange security of his strongly swinging arms she would meet Ted's eyes, watching and waiting' (*I*, p. 218). Miriam takes her 'sudden sense of daring' (*I*, p. 218) further with Max as they wander the unlit and secluded garden; she becomes liberated in Max's company: she 'tasted a new sense of ease, walking slowly along with this strange man without "making conversation" [...] Her mood expanded. He had come just at the right moment. She would keep him with her until she had to face Ted' (*I*, p. 219). Encouraged by Miriam's manner, Max talks of 'treue Liebe' – true love – and makes the audacious move of physical touch by putting his arm around her shoulder: 'She walked on horrified, cradled, her elbow resting in her companion's hand as in a cup [...] Ted was waiting somewhere in the night for her. Ted. Ted. Not this stranger. But why was Ted not bold like this? Primly and gently she disengaged herself' (*I*, p. 220). Shocked by the physicality of this unusually bold man, Miriam is, perhaps understandably, intrigued by his 'otherness', his decidedly non-Englishness. Rather than returning to Ted she continues to place herself in Max's hands, as if she were the 'cup' he held. Upon re-entering the dance, she walks about the room with 'her hand on her partner's arm' (*I*, p. 220), unaware of the "togetherness" which is signalled by their touch. Miriam's continued

association with Max only adds to guests' curious glances and the spectacle she is creating. Even Max's attire is illustrative of his otherness: 'his strange black-stitched glove holding her mittened hand. His arms steadied her' (*I*, p. 221). The strangeness of his 'black-stitched gloves' hold an appeal, he is something different, something Miriam has not experienced with men like Ted and from this glove she finds both comfort and allurement as he takes hold of her hand. But, equally, these gloves do not proffer a kindly disposition such as those yellow 'suède gloves'¹⁴ of the gentleman in Mansfield's "The Little Governess". Their dark colour and unusual stitching hint towards the potential danger of placing oneself in such gloved hands.

However, it is not just the hands of these two which offer insight into this interlude; Ted's hands also reflect his role and how he does not have a firm grasp of the romantic situation: 'Ted, ready to turn the music, his disengaged hand holding the bole of the tall palm. He dropped his hands and turned as they passed him, almost colliding with Miriam' (*I*, p. 221). Presumably uninterested in turning the music sheets, he idly fondles the plant until Miriam comes into sight, only for him to become clumsy and unassertively drop his hands; he does manage to whisper 'Next dance with me' (*I*, p. 221) but it is clear that by this point it is Max who holds the control as he once again whisks off Miriam into the garden. With Max, Miriam does not have to play the traditional compliant female role; she feels more of an equal to him and his easiness and boldness allow her to be more assertive. However, this tryst does not last and they are disturbed by Ted who brings about quite a different feeling in Miriam. Her 'trembling hands' (*I*, p. 224) indicate her uneasiness in her unpractised performance but she continues to flirtatiously play the two friends off each

¹⁴ Katherine Mansfield, "The Little Governess" in *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Constable & Company, 1953), p. 184.

other, walking between them: ‘She began to talk and laugh at random’ and, worst of all for her, ‘It excited her’ (*I*, p. 224).

Perhaps predictably, her performance does not work in her favour. Employing the dangerous tactic of inciting jealousy results in Miriam losing both Max and Ted, leaving her with only the judgement of a ‘group of conspirators’ (*I*, p. 225). Her thoughts afterwards are disjointed as she desperately realises the outcome of her actions: ‘Ted gone away. Little Ted hurt and angry. To-morrow. Perhaps he wouldn’t come. [...] Terror seized her. She wouldn’t see him. He had finished his work at the Institution. It was the big Norwich job next week’ (*I*, p. 224). She realises that by publicly placing herself in the hands of Max she has removed all potential romantic possibilities with Ted and taken herself out of this marriage market.

By performing a role which is not natural to her and employing devices she usually dislikes in women (and certainly comes to dislike seriously later in *Pilgrimage*), she believes that her flirting with Max would have ‘brought Ted to his senses’ (*I*, p. 224). However in reality, the relatively meek Ted is unable to stand up to the ‘foreign’ competition and instead removes himself from the dance and from her, without a word. Yet in Miriam’s opinion, the blame does not lie solely with her, after all: ‘Ted had failed. Ted belonged to the Rosa Nouchette Carey world. He would marry one of those women’ (*I*, p. 286). In doing this, he is no longer the endearing ‘Little Ted’, but placed in a category which is far removed from her and far from her ideal. Carey’s work, including forty-one novels, is predominantly of a sentimental nature and almost completely “feminine”, which deals with the lives of women, the trials of work inside and outside the house, family and domestic issues: this gynocentric literature is clearly marketed towards middle-class girls

and young women. Seen as “appropriate” literature for women and girls of a certain class,¹⁵ Carey’s work is read by Miriam and just prior to her comment linking Ted to Carey’s world, she thinks of the meaning of Carey’s novels and how ‘it had seemed quite possible that life might suddenly develop into the thing the writer described’:

From somewhere would come an adoring man who believed in heaven and eternal life. One would grow very good; and after the excitement and interest had worn off one would go on, with firm happy lips being good and going to church and making happy matches for other girls or quietly disapproving of everybody who did not believe just in the same way and think about good girls and happy marriages and heaven; keeping such people outside. Smiling, wise and happy inside in the warm; growing older, but that did not matter because the adored man was growing older too.

Now it had all changed. (*I*, pp. 283-4)

Indeed it has all changed and Miriam is now the person being kept ‘outside’ of Carey’s idyllic world.¹⁶ Jane Crisp comments, ““Wholesome” is the adjective that was most frequently applied to Rosa Nouchette Carey’s own novels, “sound and wholesome” was the phrase used to sum up her oeuvre’.¹⁷ This is a description Miriam would have applied to the German girls in *Pointed Roofs* but certainly not to herself: she is not “wholesome” and therefore would not be suited to Ted. But equally, it is apparent from Ted’s unassuming hands that he would not be suited to her; it is he, in this respect, not she who had “failed”.

¹⁵ See Jane Crisp, Kay Ferres & Gillian Swanson, *Deciphering Culture: Ordinary Curiosities and Subjective Narratives*. (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁶ Interestingly, reference to Carey’s work appears again later in *The Tunnel* when Dr Hurd is telling his fellow diners how he likes to be read to by his sisters: ““A wonderful authoress, what’s her name? Rosie... Newchet.” He was just longing to know how it ended. Was it sweet and wonderful, or too dreadful for anything, to contemplate a student, a fully qualified doctor, having Rosa Nouchette Carey read to him by his sisters?” (*II*, p. 388). This reiterates how Miriam associates Carey’s work with “wholesomeness” as is seen in this snippet of Hurd family life, but it also illustrates her uncertainty over how much she appreciates this in a person.

¹⁷ Jane Crisp, ‘Problematic Pleasures: the Position of Women as Writers, Readers and Film Viewers’ in Jane Crisp, Kay Ferres & Gillian Swanson, *Deciphering Culture: Ordinary Curiosities and Subjective Narratives*. (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 98.

With This Ring, I Thee Bind?

If, in *Voyage in the Dark*, the bracelet given to Anna is bestowed with binding properties, then an engagement ring would possess even more. Anna's bracelet is a token of affection from Walter and becomes symbolic of their relationship but this is not necessarily distinguishable in the eyes of others, whereas an engagement ring is a public display of intentions and therefore, becomes the ultimate item in the marriage market's costume department.

Rings offer an outward expression of one's marital status: ringless, engagement ring, wedding band, marks where a ring once was – they all tell of one's relationship status, one's position in or out of the marriage market. But the symbolism of the ring extends further than just showing that one is intended to another; with it also comes a display of the wealth of the fiancé and a display of social standing.¹⁸ The engagement ring

¹⁸ This concept is clearly illustrated by Vita Sackville-West's *Lady Slane*; her rings are representative of her marital status (and thus her title), her wealth, her husband's love (and his own awareness of his status) and come to be a defining factor of her identity. This passage is worth quoting in full: 'Lady Slane looked down at her hands. They were, as the saying goes, loaded with rings. That saying means, in so far as any saying means anything at all – and every saying, every cliché, once meant something tightly related to some human experience – that the gems concerned were too weighty for the hands that bore them. Her hands were indeed loaded with rings. They had been thus loaded by Lord Slane – tokens of affection, certainly, but no less tokens of embellishments proper to the hands of Lord Slane's wife. The great half-hoop of diamonds twisted round easily upon her finger. (Lord Slane had been wont to observe that this wife's hands were as soft as doves; which was true in a way, since they melted into nothing as one clasped them; and in another way was quite untrue, since to the outward eye they were fine, sculptural, and characteristic; but Lord Slane might be trusted to seize upon the more feminine aspect, and to ignore the subtler, less convenient suggestion.) Lady Slane, then, looked down at her hands as though Genoux had for the first time drawn attention to them. For one's hands are the parts of one's body that one suddenly sees with the maximum of detachment; they are suddenly far off; and one observes their marvellous articulations, and miraculous response to the transmission of instantaneous messages, as though they belonged to another person, or to another piece of machinery; one observes even the oval of their nails, the pores of their skin, the wrinkles of their phalanges and knuckles, their smoothness or rugosities, with an estimating and interested eye; they have been one's servants, and yet one has not investigated their personality; a personality which, cheiromancy assures us, is so much bound up with our own. One sees them also, as the case may be, loaded with rings or rough with work. So did Lady Slane look down upon her hands. They had been with her all her life, those hands. They had grown with her from the chubby hands of a child to the ivory-smooth hands of an old woman. She twisted the half-hoop of diamonds, and the half-hoop of rubies, loosely and reminiscently. She had worn them for so long that they had become part of her. "No, Genoux," she said, "soyez sans crainte; I know the rings are mine.'" (Vita Sackville-West, *All Passion Spent* (London: Virago, 2003), pp. 73-5). As has been stated in previous chapters and is seen in this quotation, the physical appearance of one's hands is an important factor in one's perception in society: the hands are either 'loaded with rings' or 'rough with work'.

is directly associated with the status of the couple; looking at Cronk and Dunham's research, Shirley Ogletree comments how 'the cost of an engagement ring was positively associated with the man's and woman's income'.¹⁹ This association highlights the importance of such an external expression of a couple's love. Not only does it represent the financial standing of a couple but, as Ogletree argues, in the woman's eyes the size of the ring also reflects the strength of the man's love for her.²⁰ In this way, the engagement ring is the same as that of the gift of the glove or bracelet which has been explored previously:²¹ the ring symbolises both presence and distance, it is the presence of the lover, wife or husband in one's life, but also when apart it materialises the lover and offers a sign of their love.

While Miriam is able to enjoy the "show" of the engagement ring – 'Your ring is simply dazzling like that, Harry. D' you see? It's the sun' (*I*, p. 202) – and is aware that by wearing this ring Harriett has certainly "achieved", it also begins to symbolise the tethering nature Miriam associates with marriage. Gender roles are significant here: if Miriam is searching for a more egalitarian relationship with a man then it is understandable that she would turn away from marriage and its associated adornments, because it is 'an establishment that has long been associated with patriarchal relationships and heterosexism'.²² But if, like Harriett, the gendered role is more traditional then one would turn towards such an institution and want all that it entails.

But it is the extravagance of her ringed fingers which is paramount to her social position. I would like to thank Dr. Amber Regis for bringing Sackville-West's novel to my attention.

¹⁹ Shirley M. Ogletree, 'With this Ring, I Thee Wed: Relating Gender Roles and Love Styles to Attitudes towards Engagement Rings and Weddings', *Gender Issues*, Vol. 27, No. 1/2 (2010), p. 68.

²⁰ See Ogletree, p. 69.

²¹ See chapters on Mansfield and Rhys.

²² Ogletree, p. 68.

While the engagement ring possesses and displays many differing factors relating to the intended couple, the wedding ring itself is a little more steadfast. Simpler in its design, the significance of this object is more related to its inherent meaning rather than to the ostentatious display of the engagement ring. As Baudrillard states: ‘an object itself is nothing; it is the signification and relations which surround, conflict and permeate this given object which invest it with cultural meaning’.²³ He continues, in ‘symbolic exchange, of which the gift is our most proximate illustration, the object is not an object: it is inseparable from the concrete relation in which it is exchanged, the transferential pact that it seals between two persons’²⁴ – this is the case with the wedding ring. While Baudrillard claims that the gift object has ‘neither use value or (economic) exchange value’,²⁵ I would contend that, in terms of a wedding ring, it is in fact invested with the latter. It may not be a physical representation of exchange value – money for products – but with it does come an economic exchange of sorts: this ring symbolises security for the wearer. For example in *Pilgrimage*, Harriett, the wearer of the ring, is guaranteed financial security by her husband Gerald, and in return Gerald is provided with a wife and a mother for his children. In the same way, Sarah finds security in her marriage with Bennett as she ‘need never worry any more’ and, equally, Bennett is supplied with Sarah who will take ‘over the management of the new house and the new practice and the new practitioner’ (*I*, p. 341). The ring may not be a concrete commodity (other than in its purchase) in the exchange of the gift but, as Baudrillard has it, ‘the definition of an object of consumption is entirely independent of objects themselves and *exclusively a function of the logic of significations*’.²⁶ What significations the wedding ring holds and what it comes to

²³ See Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press Ltd, 1981), p. 63.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 64.

²⁵ *Idem*.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 67, original emphasis.

symbolise does indeed have exchange value. Baudrillard continues his analysis on the subject of wedding rings:

The wedding ring: This is a unique object, symbol of the relationship of the couple. One would neither think of changing it (barring mishap) nor of wearing several. The symbolic object is made to last and to witness in its duration the permanence of the relationship. Fashion plays as negligible a role at the strictly symbolic level as at the level of pure instrumentality.²⁷

In this manner there is a clear distinction between the ‘wedding ring’ and the ‘ordinary ring’; the former is not a commodity as an ordinary ring is, being only ‘a personal gratification, in the eyes of others’.²⁸ However, what the wedding ring symbolises can be seen as a commodification of the relationship or of the exchange value of this relationship; it is indicative of social standing and as an object it is certainly a status sign to be seen in the eyes of others. By wearing the ring one is taking on a “role” – a fiancée, a wife – it becomes an integral part of the costume relating to one’s performed role.

While Miriam does often consider the idea of love, when it comes to marriage it does not seem to be her primary concern; financial security is the only advantage she can see. Miriam lacks the traditional social motivation (conformity, social norms) of others and therefore does not “play the part” successfully. She sees Harriett’s change in status, a change of identity, as she moves towards a more domestic life – ‘Harriett’s ringed fingers had finished dipping and drying the blue and white tea-service’; ‘The fourth cup of creamy tea; Harriett’s firm ringed hand’ (*I*, p. 293; *II*, p. 226) – in which Harriett’s rings become a defining factor in her appearance and Miriam becomes more aware that being solely associated with the domestic is not something she wants for herself.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 66.

²⁸ Idem.

Performativity of the Marriage Market

With the upcoming nuptials of Harriett and Gerald, Miriam considers how it is not just the presence of the rings that has changed Harriett:

How he had changed her since Easter when their engagement had been openly allowed. The clothes he had bought for her, especially this plain drill dress with its neat little coat. The long black tie fastened with the plain heavy cable broach pinned in lengthwise half-way down the ends of the tie, which reached almost to her black belt. That was Gerald. Her shoes, the number of pairs of light, expensive, beautifully made shoes. Her bearing, the change in her voice [...] He would forgive all her ignorance. It was her triumph. What an extraordinary time Harry would have. Gerald was well-off. (*I*, p. 295)²⁹

In this way, Harriett is changed both for the better and for the worse. Once again, the adjectives Miriam uses to describe her attempt to become more serious – ‘plain’, ‘heavy’, ‘neat’, ‘expensive’ – while less playful than before, they signal Harriett’s move into a secure lifestyle. Gerald is ‘well-off’ and offers the chance of safety and stability, a place in which Harriett is able simply to *be*; however, this comes with certain conditions: Harriett is able only to be what *he* wants her to be, it is he who changes her, from her attire to how she holds herself and how she speaks. Harriett’s new, expensive clothes are a stark contrast with Miriam’s ‘blouse dim with a week of school wear, and her black skirt oppressed her with its invisible burden of grime’ (*I*, p. 294). By becoming a married woman, Harriett will never have to worry about being ‘strained and tired’ (*I*, p. 294) from work, or having to wear clothes that oppress her with their constant reminder of the work that has been done or is yet to be done; this, unfortunately, is all that Miriam can see in her foreseeable future as a single, working woman.

²⁹ Interestingly a year long engagement since it was ‘openly allowed’ is recognised until they are married, although in truth their engagement was longer as Miriam was made aware of their engagement while she was still in Germany. This relatively long engagement would have been adopted as Harriett and Gerald had not previously known each other for a long period of time. Marriage etiquette of the time required the length of the engagement to reflect the length of acquaintance of the couples. (See Patricia Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 27). The difference required length of engagement can be seen in Harriett’s and Gerald’s over year-long engagement when compared to Sarah’s relatively short engagement to their long-standing friend, Bennett Brodie.

Miriam is acutely aware of the impending removal of Harriett, her “Goobie”:

‘It could not go on. Presently some claim would be made on Harriett and she would be alone. [...] Harriett, grown-up, serene and well-dressed and going to be married in the spring’ (*I*, p. 297). As ever, Miriam turns to nature and here the arrival of spring offers hope for Harriett, but with it comes uncertainty for Miriam. Again Harriett’s new clothes come to represent her new status; while Miriam’s dim and grimy clothes reflect her unhappiness in her position as a “worker”, Harriett’s become clean, neat and serious – which is Miriam’s impression of what a married woman should be like. The idea becomes apparent again when all four sisters are talking about what men like to see women wear and, more importantly, what the men choose to buy for their women. In the endearing familial “gossip” between sisters, Sarah’s wisdom with men comes to the fore when they are discussing fashion choices:

‘It is extraordinary about all those white dresses,’ said Miriam [...] ‘Sarah says it’s because men like them, [...] I wonder if there’s anything in it’ [...] ‘Of course there is,’ said Sarah, releasing the last strap of Eve’s trunk. ‘They’d *all* put on coloured things if it weren’t for that.’ ‘Men tell them.’ ‘Do they?’ ‘The engaged men tell them – or brothers.’ (*I*, pp. 300-1, original emphasis)

This reaffirms Miriam’s concerns over the control held over women; coming from a family of four girls, Miriam has never been subject to a brother’s dictate so therefore has never been eased into this idea of submission. Miriam regards Sarah as the font of all courtship and relationship knowledge as she excitedly tells her other sisters: ‘She says she knows why the Pooles look down and smirk [...] that men admire them looking down like that’ only to get the reply ‘It’s those kind of girls get on best’ (*I*, p. 301). It would seem this answer tells of the Poole girls’ success in snaring a man. Miriam’s naivety is also apparent as she is astonished by Sarah’s knowledge: ‘Sarah says there are much more awful reasons. I can’t think how she finds them out [...] It’s too utterly sickening somehow, for words’ (*I*,

p. 301). This is a key part of Miriam's journey; she has already, unsuccessfully, tried out a role worthy of the Poole 'smirk' with Ted and Max, but it is in this discussion with her sisters that she is made aware of how she conducts herself in the marriage market.

Unbeknown to Miriam, she too partakes in this performance; a performance that her sisters are all too happy to tell her of:

"we're *all* different when there are men about to when we're by ourselves. We all make eyes, in a way."

"Eve! What a perfectly beastly thing to say."

"It isn't, my dear," said Eve pensively. "You should see yourself; *you* do."

"Sally, *do* I?"

"Of course you do," giggled Eve quietly, "as much as anybody."

"Then I'm the most crawling thing on the face of the earth," thought Miriam, turning silently to the tree-tops looming softly just outside the window; "and the worst of it is I only know it at moments now and again." The tree-tops, serene with some happy secret, cast her off, and left her standing with groping cringing fingers unable to lift the misery that pressed upon her heart. (*I*, pp. 301-2, original emphasis)

Her own complicity in this performance is brought to her attention and her hands reflect her uneasiness with this aspect of her performance, especially as it is an aspect she so dislikes in others. It is a familiar feature of Miriam's internal thoughts that she turns to the outside, to nature and the freedom it offers. But even the serene, all-knowing, tree-tops spurn her and she is left alone with unhappy, hardening fingers 'groping' their way. Her hardening, 'cringing' hands are also indicative of the hardening of her 'self' as she moves forward alone, whilst her three sisters venture forth into their own lives.

Miriam continues to notice the change in Harriett and Gerald during their holiday in Brighton, and is disconcerted by how far this moves them away from her:

Gerald did not seem to mind the chaffy talk and vulgar jokes, and would generally join in [...] he and Harriett talked to the niggers too and found out about them [...] Gerald and Harriett did not seem to mind this. They did not seem to mind anything out of doors. They were free and hard and contemptuous of every one [...] Gerald said extraordinary, disturbing things about the girls on the esplanade. (*I*, p. 319)

She appears to be opposed to all that Harriett and Gerald like and do; her snobbery is seen as she dislikes Gerald's involvement in such vulgar conversations and her latent racism is apparent when she does not want to "spoil" the charm of the 'niggers' by finding out that they have 'wives and families and illnesses and trouble' (*I*, p. 319). The 'hardening' of Harriett and Gerald is different to Miriam's own 'crisping', as theirs is a joint venture enabling freedom, whereas Miriam's is the effect of a solitary life. But is it not Miriam, rather than Harriett and Gerald, who is 'contemptuous'? Having such an insight into the mind and opinions of a man makes her question how she is viewed by other men: is she, too, subject to 'disturbing' remarks? 'Were she and Eve also "on show"; waiting to be given "half an inch"; would she or Eve be "perfectly awful in the dark"? Did the young men they favoured specially with their notice say things about them?' (*I*, p. 319). Having involvement with those successful in the marriage market throws light onto her own undesirable situation and the emerging difficulties: from this she becomes aware that Eve and herself are now in the sexual market and are subject to men's estimation of their status 'in the dark'. While she is conscious of the potential pitfalls in such a marketplace she is aware of the possibility of romantic enjoyment:

She discovered that a single steady unexpected glance, meeting her own, from a man who had the right kind of bearing – something right about the set of shoulders – could disperse all the vague trouble she felt at the perpetual spectacle of the strolling crowds, the stiffly waiting many-eyed houses, the strange stupid bathing-machines, and send her gaily forward in a glad world where there was no need to be alone in order to be happy. (*I*, p. 319)

Now aware of her place 'on show', her surroundings become a maelstrom of spectacles, performance and observation, yet receiving one reciprocated glance from a man of 'the right kind of bearing' can alleviate such angst. Naturally her own awakening sexuality begins to confuse her and problematises her previous steadfastness as she swings between despising a man to desiring him which only further complicates her position amongst 'the crowd'.

Even though Miriam dislikes the changes seen in Harriett and Gerald, she realises the advantages of a married life: ‘it’s awfully jolly for Harry he’s like that. She’ll never be lonely’ (*I*, p. 321). Harriett is embarking on a shared future in the hands of another, whereas all that faces Miriam is the decision of whether to become ‘a certificated teacher’ or to move into a household so as to earn more money – neither of which includes a thought of marriage. Just as Anna in *Voyage in the Dark* found difficulty in reconciling her “true self” with the “act”, so too does Miriam. As was seen with her flirting with Max and the resulting failed relationship with Ted, Miriam is unable to play the part successfully, so as to be a contender in the marketplace; while she intermittently desires a partner she does not want to sacrifice herself permanently and the reconciliation of this is a problem with which she continually battles: ‘What was life? Either playing a part all the time in order to be amongst people in the warm, or standing alone with the strange true real feeling’ (*I*, p. 320).

The Alternative?

As we have seen, Miriam has been exposed to the concept of marriage and her role within it as a young woman in need of security but, importantly, she has also been exposed to the alternative option – the “Old Maid”. After her initial interview with the Perne sisters in the North London school, Miriam discusses her impression of them with her mother.

‘Don’t you think they were awfully nice?’

‘I do. They are very charming ladies.’ [...]

‘D’you remember the little one saying all girls ought to marry? Why did she say that?’

‘They are dear funny little O.M.’s,’ said Mrs Henderson merrily. She was sitting with her knees crossed, the stuff of her brown canvas dress was dragged across them into an ugly fold by the weight of the velvet panel at the side of the skirt. She looked very small and resourceless. And there were the Pernes with their house and their school. They were old maids. Of course. What then? (*I*, p. 193)

Mrs Henderson, as a married woman, is able, kindly but condescendingly, to laugh off their foibles as they are simply ‘funny little O.M.’s’.³⁰ Miriam is struck on several fronts by her encounter with these old maids: firstly the thought that all girls should marry, as Miriam is constantly questioning this idea and secondly, she unconsciously estimates her mother’s social standing in relation to the Pernes. Indeed her mother has “achieved” in that she has a husband, children and a home but, as a consequence, she is left ‘resourceless’. She is the one who is small, frail and in ill-fitting clothing which is past its best, whereas the Pernes have their own house, their own school, a continual income of money, ‘many very wealthy relatives and the very best kind of good clothes and good deal of strange old-fashioned jewellery’ (*I*, p. 275); and the sacrifice for all this? A husband. In Miriam’s estimation, it seems a small price to pay for the security of holding your future in your own hands. But as ever, economics are an important factor here; Miriam does not come from a wealthy family which would provide for her but, equally, as we see in Mrs Henderson, having a husband does not necessarily secure one’s finances.

Whereas Fräulein Pfaff was a more stern, austere example of this position, the Pernes, and Miss Haddie in particular, offered a softer and certainly more affluent version of the old maid. Once again, the depictions of their hands come to represent Miriam’s estimation of them. Her first observation tells: ‘They were all three dressed in thin fine black material and had tiny hands’ (*I*, p. 190). Their tiny hands illustrate their lady-like status and their black apparel signals them as women who work.³¹ There are repeated

³⁰ This can be seen as an opinion mainly espoused by *married* women. A 1932 short story “Old Maid” in *The Saturday Evening Post* reflects Mrs Henderson’s sentiment: ‘My mother had always told me that it was cruel to make fun of old maids. “Poor things, they can’t help it,” she said. “People ought to feel sorry for them”’. (Rose Wilder Lane, “Old Maid” in *The Saturday Evening Post* (July 23 1932), p. 10). And the ‘poor thing’ who was subject of this concern? She was a teacher of but twenty-four, not a far stretch from Miriam’s own position.

³¹ In the continuous circular reading that *Pilgrimage* invites, it is not a far leap to make the connection between the black outfits of the three Perne sisters and the black outfits which Miriam is required to don later when she is working in Wimpole Street; after all: ‘the woman in black works’ (*II*, p. 223).

depictions of the hands of the three sisters, showing them to be kind but equally showing them to be “past their best” as the descriptions are littered with adjectives such as ‘thin’ and ‘frail’ although nevertheless comforting, for example when Miss Haddie ‘held one of her hands in two small welcoming ones’ (*I*, p. 264). Miss Haddie, though the youngest of the three sisters by far, at the mere age of thirty-five is seen as old, frail with grey hair and “old-fashioned” views. She is already deemed an old maid with no hope of marriage, clearly past her prime: ‘Miss Haddie’s thin fingers feeling for the pins in her black toque. “Of course not,’ she thought, looking at the unveiled shrivelled cheek. ... “thirty-five years of being a lady”’ (*I*, p. 257). At this age Miss Haddie is already out of the marriage market as the etiquette of the time dictates that most young women will be contemplating engagements at the age of seventeen;³² although some, more generous, authors of etiquette such as G.R.M. Devereux, do consider a later marriage more favourably, thinking ‘a girl of two- or three-and-twenty and a man of twenty-eight or thirty are my ideal of a suitably matched couple’.³³ Either at the age of seventeen or twenty-three, this idea highlights Miriam’s quickly diminishing position in the marriage market, as at the age of eighteen (or twenty when Harriett and Sarah marry) she is either already too old or certainly in need of a husband post-haste.

On a boating trip with Harriett and Gerald, Miriam’s unwed status is again raised; this time by her future brother-in-law:

‘It shows you can’t be a blue-stockings, thank the Lord,’ laughed Gerald.

‘Who said I was?’

‘I’ve always understood you were a very wise lady, my dear.’ (*I*, p. 296)

³² See Florence Hartley, *The Ladies’ Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness* (Boston: G.W. Cottrell, 1860), p. 245.

³³ G.R.M. Devereux, *The Etiquette of Engagement and Marriage* (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd, 1903), p. 41.

This offhand remark from Gerald highlights Miriam's potential to be perceived as a blue-stocking, something which she hadn't previously considered. The term blue-stocking was once used to refer to women with literary interests but this phrase soon became a derogatory term for the learned (and thus unattractive) woman: 'thence transferred sneeringly to any woman showing a taste for learning, a literary lady'.³⁴ We only have to turn to William Hazlitt to gain an impression of the connotations of such a word; in "Table Talk No.II" he espouses the qualities he wishes to find in a woman and, more importantly, the qualities she should certainly not possess:

What is worse, I have an utter aversion to *blue-stockings*. I do not care a fig for any woman that knows even what *an author* means. If I know that she has read any thing I have written, I cut her acquaintance immediately. [...] I would have her read my soul: she should understand the language of the heart: she should know what I am, as if she were another self! She should love me for myself alone. I like myself without any reason:— I would have her do so too.³⁵

This wonderfully evocative quote illustrates how the term "blue-stocking" came to represent the undesirable woman; clearly a man who was intelligent and educated himself was not in want of such an equally matched wife. Again it also associates the woman with the body; in this case the heart, and moves her away from masculine intellect. Adopting a similarly condescending air, Gerald, who is bound for matrimony, is able to take the superior position over Miriam and make the connection between her intellect and her being single: the former dictates the latter. Miriam's status as a bluestocking is also alluded to earlier by Bob:

That's a mystery to me. How you've allowed your young sister to overhaul you. Perhaps you have a Corydon hidden away somewhere – or don't think favourably of the bonds of matrimony? Is that it? [...] Don't let your thoughts and ideas allow you to miss happiness. Women are made to find and dispense happiness. *Even intense women like yourself*. But you won't find it an easy matter to discover your mate. (*I*, p. 268, my emphasis)

³⁴ *OED*.

³⁵ William Hazlitt, 'Table Talk. No. II: On Great and Little Things', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, Vol.III (Philadelphia: E. Littell, 1822), p. 135, original emphasis.

Not only does this place her amongst the ranks of ‘intense women’ – bluestockings – it also highlights her shortcomings in the marriage market as she has allowed Harriett to ‘overhaul’ her and her future prospects will not be an ‘easy matter’. This and her exchange with Gerald, albeit in a friendly manner, illustrate society’s negative views of such women; Gerald becomes the mouthpiece of a wider opinion and his patronising tone is only furthered when he belittles her with phrases such as ‘my dear’. Miriam is faced with two options: being unmarried because of her intelligent, blue-stockings status, which ultimately results in becoming an old maid or giving up her mind and intellect so as to marry. How can she ever reconcile these options with her developing identity as a New Woman?

Miriam and Eve are flung together in their mutual situation of single, working women. While Sarah and Harriett are to be taken care of by their marriages, Miriam and Eve must continue working with no prospect of husbands. This is seen when Miriam asks Harriett about life with another person:

Harriett must not know how she was rushing to meet Eve; with what tingling fingers. ‘Oh, what I was going to ask you was whether you can see the moonlight like it is when you are alone, when Gerald is there.’

‘... It isn’t the same as when you are alone,’ said Harriet quietly, arranging the cuff of her glove. (*I*, p. 299)

Does sharing your life with someone alter your relationship with nature, with the universe? This is certainly a pertinent question to Miriam. Her uncertainty and questioning in this area are seen in the differing depiction of their hands: Miriam’s hands are free, her fingers are ‘tingling’ and alive whereas Harriett’s are secured and confined in her gloves which she is quietly arranging. This depiction directly reflects some of Miriam’s thoughts on marriage, on the respective freedom and constriction of their situations. It is these existential questions which plague Miriam’s thoughts, and put her quite at odds with her

sisters and other female acquaintances who do not think in these terms and therefore do not have such worries.

The Weddings, the End?

As *Honeycomb* and Volume I draw to a close we reach the weddings of Harriett and Sarah, a rite of passage from which Miriam is excluded. The wedding day brings with it both excitement and fear for Miriam. Performing her duties as bridesmaid, it is Miriam who figuratively takes hold of Harriett's former life, 'taking the long glove smooth and warm from Harriett's hand' (*I*, pp. 461-2); by holding this glove she symbolically frees Harriett's hand ready to receive the wedding ring and all that it entails. During the service, Miriam once again contemplates the couples: 'Marriage was a reality ... fearful, searching reality; it changed people's expressions' (*I*, p. 462). No more are Harriett and Sarah the sisters of her childhood. Marriage has changed them: 'old and stricken; that was how Sarah looked too. No radiance on the faces of Sarah and Harriett' (*I*, p. 462). Although disconcerted by how they have changed, Miriam again returns to her pragmatic approach: 'Sarah and Harriett, rescued from poverty and fear' (*I*, p. 462), something from which Miriam may never be rescued. The weddings signal the end of the Henderson sisters' sorority, a move forward to the future – for better or for worse.

At the reception, Miriam, much like Anna in *Voyage in the Dark*, makes an attempt to regain a sense of the happiness of the childhood they had shared:

Harriett turned a scorched cheek and a dilated unseeing eye. Their hands dropped and met. Miriam felt the quivering of firm, strong fingers and the warm metal of the rings. She grasped the matronly hand with the whole strength of her own. Harriett must remember ... all this wedding was nothing. ... She was Harriett. [...] she must remember all the years of being together, years of nights side by side ... nights turning to day for both of them, at the same moment. She gave her hand a little shake. (*I*, p. 463)

However, Harriett has already changed and is starting to move away from Miriam; her ‘unseeing eye’ no longer registers Miriam in the same way and the depiction of her hands illustrates her distance from Miriam. The ‘warm metal’ of the binding rings imbues Harriett with strength in her ‘matronly’ hands which Miriam can only attempt to match with all her strength, but it also represents a physical and metaphorical barrier between the wed and unwed sisters. Miriam is almost jealous of Harriett’s new venture and is keen to make her aware that she is more than merely a wife and of the need to remember their times together. Miriam gestures this with ‘a little shake’ of the hand but it is not long before Gerald arrives, ‘Harriett welcomed it’ (*I*, p. 463) and she is no longer solely Miriam’s.



When the four Henderson sisters are alone, the divide between those married and those unmarried is all too apparent: ‘the voices of Sarah and Harriett would go on ... marked with fresh things. ... Her own and Eve’s would remain, separate, to grow broken and false and unrecognisable in the awful struggle for money’ (*I*, p. 464). Miriam is, perhaps cynically, unable to separate marriage from a financial arrangement which to her seems to be the only advantage marriage offers; aside from this, like Durkheim, Miriam considers that in marriage ‘There is no compensation or relief for the woman’.³⁶ Miriam’s search for her “real” self does not include marriage, ‘To hold back and keep free ... and real. Impossible to be real unless you were quite free. ... Two married in one family was enough. Eve would marry, too. But money’ (*I*, p. 459). Unhappy with the performance involved in securing a husband, Miriam wants to be free from these traditional

³⁶ Durkheim, p. 272.

expectations but time and again she comes back to her economic estimation of marriage – how will she ever achieve real freedom if she is not financially secure? However, Pilar Hidalgo argues that it is for this very reason that she is able to obtain freedom:

But her leisure and her combination of involvement and non-involvement (both characteristics of the flâneur) hinge on gender. For one thing, her leisure depends on *her not being married*, on her mother being dead, and on her resisting the emotional demands made on her by other women.³⁷

Without the traditional restraints, Miriam is able to move freely between groups, social circles and locations. All her early concerns over not being married and financially secure are in fact those very things which enable her to become the independent and “real” woman she strives to be. However, this is not an instant transformation and before she reaches this truly independent position and a greater understanding of her ‘self’ she is, once again, exposed to the marriage market when she meets Michael Shatov.

³⁷ Pilar Hidalgo, ‘Female Flânerie in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*’, *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, Vol. 6 (1993), p. 95, my emphasis.

THE HAPTIC CONNECTION: MIRIAM AND MICHAEL

The text poses two problems in relation to Miriam's and Michael's relationship: understanding concepts of the self and concepts of biology. Both are tied up with the notion of gender and of gender difference but the latter is further confused by the question of race. So how are we to read Miriam's perception of her self? Her subjectivity is not a fixed point: we can only read it as it is presented to us in that moment but we must do so with the awareness that it will develop and progress – it is constantly in flux. Equally her views on biology make drawing grand conclusions complicated. Instead, they create contradictions: on the one hand she vehemently rejects the masculine, generalising, biological interpretation of the procreative "Woman" but, almost in the same breath, she categorises and rejects Michael on grounds of her own biological assumption and generalisation of his Jewishness. Is this because she is fundamentally racist or does the narrative deliberately play on this so as to foreground these contradictions? It certainly problematises a finite understanding of issues such as anti-semitism or gender binaries, but a way to negotiate this and to tease out an understanding from the tangle of contradictions is to turn to the haptic.

More so than with any other man thus far in *Pilgrimage*, Miriam's relationship with Michael exhibits haptic qualities. While the movement and positioning are, as ever, important, this haptic relationship moves beyond the mere touch of the hand as they are able to connect on more than physical levels. While Abbie Garrington argues that a haptic reading in literature is more than what previous definitions have claimed (it is 'something more than touch. It is the combination of an intentional reaching and touching with the

human skin, in addition to the appreciation of movement by the body as a whole'¹), I propose that it is something even more. To elaborate this argument I return to Garrington's use of Giuliana Bruno's notion that 'the haptic is also related to kinesthesia, the ability of our bodies to sense their own movement in space'.² What I contend, drawing on the physical and psychological aspects of the haptic, is that not only is it the ability of our body to sense *its* own movement in space but to also sense *others'* movement, to connect with them haptically. Garrington hints at this connection with the idea of 'the more-than-touch haptic' in a later article which distinguishes it as the 'tripartite haptic', containing touch, 'kinaesthesia' and the new term 'proprioception',³ which is defined as 'the perception of the position and movements of the body'.⁴ While the addition of this new term does grant her haptic terminology more "awareness", it is still one-sided; what I suggest is a more reciprocal haptic definition where the connection allows the perception of both personal movements but also those movements of the person to which they are connected as well as the ability to touch or move another person. This is the haptic connection which Miriam and Michael share. Miriam is both aware of her 'self', her movement in space and how other people perceive her but she is also aware of Michael, how he haptically occupies space and, indeed, how he is perceived; it is this latter awareness which is often the cause of Miriam's almost binary view of Michael: that of his "essence" – how she haptically connects with him – and that of his Jewishness – that which is the cause of her discomfort.

Like some of Miriam's other relationships with men, her connection with Michael is founded on an intellectual level, on mutual exploration of philosophy, science and

¹ Abbie Garrington, 'Touching Dorothy Richardson: Approaching *Pilgrimage* as a Haptic Text', *Pilgrimages: A Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 1 (2008), p. 76.

² Ibid, p. 77.

³ Abbie Garrington, 'Touching Texts: The Haptic Sense in Modernist Literature', *Literature Compass*, Vol. 7, No. 9 (2010), p. 811.

⁴ OED.

gender; their haptic connection extends further than merely physical touch as it is through their conversations that their voices take on the quality of touch. Initially this begins with their lessons and Miriam's teaching of English to the Russian: "'You must let me correct your English to-day,'" she said, busily taking him with her voice by the hand in a forward rush' (*III*, p. 27). Here she is able to take the more knowledgeable and authoritative position as she directs him, but what is salient here is that her utterance moves from purely dictating to having the ability to take 'him with her voice by the hand'. Their connection moves beyond a student/teacher relationship and is strengthened by how their words move each other in a haptic sense. Equally, when Michael is exposing the wonders of the Russian language she does not simply listen to the words but feels them: 'she felt the touch of a new strange presence in her Europe. She listened, watching intently, far off, hearing now only a voice, moving on, without connected meaning. ... The strange thing that had touched her was somewhere within the voice; the sound of Russia' (*III*, p. 43). Again, the spoken words create momentum and an awareness of movement within space: these haptic words have the ability to move and lead the hearer. What, on the surface, would seemingly appear to be a foreign incursion on 'her Europe' becomes a 'vivid' and awakening 'impression [that] was not yet alien. It was not *foreign*' and has the ability to touch her and promise 'vibrating reflection, later' (*III*, p. 43, original emphasis). It is worth noting here that Miriam's impression of Michael being a native of Russia is decidedly separate to her views of his Jewishness: the former does not possess the latter's negative connotations. The power of their verbal communication is found in their equal control: they are each able to instruct the other and, likewise, they are each able to haptically communicate to the other with their words.

But no matter how far Miriam's and Michael's relationship develops it is ever marred by a 'hidden flaw'⁵ – his Jewishness. While she finds him liberating, exciting and engaging she can never get past his religious, racial, and national difference; eventually his flaws no longer remain hidden and the majority are a definite result of his Jewishness. Michael's hands are often representative of his "otherness" and Miriam's feelings towards them oscillate from adoration to disgust. One of the first images of his hands that we are given draws the attention not to the size or type of hand that he possesses but to its embellishments:

There was a ring on the little finger of the hand that drew from an inner pocket a limp leather pocket-book; pale old gold curving up to a small pimple of jewels. The ringed hand moving above the dip of the double watch-chain gave his youth a strange look of mellow wealthy middle-age. (*III*, p. 25)

The stereotypical connotation of Jews associated with finance is all too evident here in this Faginesque depiction. Though Michael possesses young, active hands they are linked with wealth and the ring and watch-chain becomes symbolic of the pervading association between Jewishness and money. The 'pale old gold' indicates a ring possessing years beyond his own and suggests that, much like his Jewishness, he is likely to have inherited it from his family. The 'old gold' and 'middle-age' all link Michael's appearance with the "old" and "ancient" impression of archaic Judaism that Miriam has. His wealthy, jewelled image is furthered with the presence of the chain leading to his gold pocket watch. Later when he intends to pawn the watch to aid a friend financially, Miriam recognises how much a part of him these embellishments are and how she has become accustomed to his 'opulence': 'jealously eyeing the decoration that seemed now to have been an essential part of their many meetings. Without this mark of opulence, he would not be quite the same...' (*III*, p. 73).

⁵ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage III* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 193. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *III*.

However, this opulent foreignness does not always remain thrilling and Miriam's latent xenophobia comes to the fore. Such feelings often surface when they are in public. On one such occasion she meets him outside the Holborn Library, fearing that she is late, and scans the London vista only to see 'a shabby, sinister-looking Tottenham Court Road foreign loafer, in yellow boots, an overcoat of an evil shade of brown, and a waiter's black-banded grey felt hat [...] it *was* Mr Shatov' (*III*, p. 54, original emphasis). She views his appearance as that of an alien threat, describing him as 'sinister' and 'evil', and the choice of 'shabby', which Miriam so often uses for herself, denotes only a lower class position which is further indicated by his 'waiter's hat'. His disgraceful appearance is cemented by the fact that: 'He was gloveless, and in his hands, grimed with walking in the winter streets, he held a paper bag of grapes which he ate as he talked, expelling the skins and flinging them from him as he walked. ... He looked just simply disreputable' (*III*, p. 54). This rather unappealing depiction is far from the 'shabby' she unhappily (although sometimes proudly) uses to describe herself. Its use here takes on a much more sinister and vulgar tone as his ungloved hands are covered in grime and he brazenly eats his grapes whilst talking and walking, impertinently throwing the half eaten skins to the floor – hardly the epitome of English decency. Miriam's fear stems from her haptic connection with him, if she is able to sense her own and his movement in space, then she becomes acutely aware of how he occupies this space, especially in the public sphere. This fear leads her to question her public association with such a foreigner: how would people – the readers who knew her by sight and the British Museum officials – perceive her if she was in acquaintance with such a disreputable figure?

Certainly, a more vehement and uncomfortable scene relating to Miriam's prejudices occurs when they visit the docks and take tea in a small tea shop. Contemplating

Michael's otherness in 'this strange grey corner of a country not his own' (*III*, p. 216), Miriam's thoughts are suddenly diverted to disgust as she encounters a man even more alien than the Russian Michael: 'Miriam sat frozen, appalled by the presence of a negro' (*III*, p. 217). Her Europe, indeed her London, becomes at once contaminated by this foreign infiltration; finding Michael's ethno-religious identity hard to contemplate soon becomes nothing in the face of the black man:

He sat near by, huge, bent, snorting and devouring, with a huge black bottle at his side. Mr Shatov's presence was shorn of its alien quality. He was an Englishman in the fact that he and she could *not* sit eating in the neighbourhood of this marshy jungle. But they were, they had. They would have. Once away from this awful place she would never think of it again. Yet the man had hands and needs and feelings. Perhaps he could sing. He was at a disadvantage, an outcast. [...] There was no *time* to shake off the sense of contamination. It *was* contamination. (*III*, p. 217, original emphasis)

By correlating this man with animalistic qualities and displaying such dislike of this stranger, Miriam is directly guilty of the prejudices she has just been condemning. Just prior to experiencing this contaminating presence, she refers to Huxley, the 'impertinent schoolboy' who stated that women 'could never reach the highest places in civilisation' (*III*, p. 216) simply because of their gender. This argument can be directly transposed to the racial generalising and bigotry that Miriam is party to in this tea shop: this man is not fit to be in their presence simply because of his racial identity. In fact, much of Miriam's disgust with other racial identities is similar to that which is found abhorrent in women; certainly the contaminatory effect Miriam feels from this black man is akin to the contaminatory effect women are perceived to have.⁶ If we are to read this haptically, then how this man occupies the space in the tea shop is pertinent; it is his very 'oppressive presence' that contaminates the space around Miriam, turning the tea shop into a 'marshy jungle' (*III*, p. 217). Lauren Curtwright claims that 'This figure accords precisely with the

⁶ See Juliet Yates, 'Feminine Fluidity: Mind versus Body in *Pilgrimage*', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 2 (2009).

myth of the hypersexualised black male “brute”,⁷ which is reaffirmed by the phallic presence of the ‘huge black bottle at his side’. This image once again conflates concerns of gender, race and sexuality in determining (and judging) one’s perception in society which certainly corresponds with the representation of the black male as ‘dangerously hypersexualised’.⁸ What is also significant is Miriam’s different levels of racism; whilst she is often derogatory about Michael’s ethnicity, his otherness, his contaminating effect is certainly lessened by the presence of this ‘negro’. But the fact that this man, like Miriam and like Michael, has hands renders him both abject and analogous; Miriam’s recognition that ‘he had hands’ in her list of human attributes means that the human hand is a common connecting factor – they are connected as they both possess hands yet it is those very hands which separate them: the colour, size and appearance all work to differentiate between their positions in society and, evidently, in humanity.

Michael’s recognition of the change in their connection and Miriam’s social position within the tea shop is signalled when he states: ‘You see, Miriam, if instead of beating me, you will tell me your *thoughts*, it is quite possible that mine may be modified. There is at least nothing of the bigot in me’ (*III*, p. 217). The term ‘beating’ has dual connotations; it can relate to the competitive one-upmanship that Miriam is trying to achieve but it also relates to the haptic nature of their conversations. The “touch” that was often felt from their voices is no longer a positive experience but takes on a more violent nature where Miriam’s words have the ability to ‘beat’ Michael.

After their romance is finally sealed with a kiss, Miriam begins to see herself differently – her ‘self’ and her perception of her ‘self’ are viewed as separate entities: ‘The

⁷ Lauren Curtwright, ‘Scattered Vision and Silent Masks: Dorothy Richardson’s Critical Perceptions on Race’, *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 4 (2012), p. 10.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 25.

woman facing her in the mirror as she put on her hat was the lonely Miriam Henderson, unendurably asked to behave in a special way. For he was standing eloquently silent and the hands arranging her hat trembled reassuringly' (*III*, p. 194). Separating 'her' from the reflection in the mirror fragments her identity and also highlight the expected social performance of having to 'behave in a special way'; she is able to view her old self, the 'lonely Miriam Henderson' compared to her new, changing identity in the light of the 'surprises of being in love' (*III*, p. 194). Equally, 'the hands arranging her hat' are seen as separate from her being. They become autonomous entities that carry out familiar tasks; the fact that they 'tremble reassuringly' both connects them as familiar but also disconnects them from her previous shame and gives them a positive, reassuring demeanour. However, this comforting connection with her hands does not last and she is returned to her previous disposition:

Her limbs were powerless. With an immense effort she stretched forth an enormous arm and, with a hand frightful in its size and clumsiness, tapped him on the shoulder. It was as if she had knocked him down, the blow she had given resounding through the world. He bent to catch at her retreating hand with the attitude of carrying it to his lips, but she was away down the room, her breath caught by a little gurgle of unknown laughter. (*III*, p. 194)

Once again, Miriam has no agency over her own body; her hands have a force of their own as they are propelled to giantess status. Her attempt to engage in romantically-intended physical touch with Michael is thwarted by the gargantuan appearance of her hands. But rather than repelling him with her 'enormous' and 'frightful' hands, he is attracted and endeavours to return the touch by catching 'her retreating hand'; although he was not successful in bestowing a parting kiss the intention of reciprocation is acknowledged by both parties and further cemented later when his own hands offer a gift: 'He was at the end of the street in the evening, standing bright in the golden light with a rose in his hand' (*III*, p. 194). Miriam's desire to connect haptically with Michael is constantly superseded by her

inability to physically relate to another; whether this is caused by a sense of prudishness or an unwillingness to open up to another is difficult to decipher:

If she could dare to lay her hand upon him, he might know. But they were too separate. And if he were to touch her now, they would again be separated for longer than before, for always. ‘Good night,’ she said, brushing his sleeve with the tips of her fingers, ‘dear, funny little man.’ (*III*, p. 202)

While she wishes to ‘lay her hand upon him’ to indicate her feelings to him, she is unable to completely connect – they are still too ‘separate’ and equally if he was able to overcome this distance in space and physically touch her, it would further remove her from him in their haptically shared space. She does, however, manage to make a gesture, but only with the very ‘tips of her fingers’ and depart with a patronising and feminising farewell.

However, their imperfect but hitherto untarnished romance is finally shattered when Michael reveals, with the ‘trembling of his voice’, his past sexual encounters and he is ‘lost to her, for ever’ (*III*, pp. 203-4). Miriam boards the waiting train and simply states: “‘Well, I must go,” she said briskly, the words sounding out to her like ghostly hammer-blows upon empty space. Never again should her voice sound’ (*III*, p. 204). As the train departs the platform, she leaves Michael and ‘She set her teeth against the slow movement of the wheels [...] clenched together for the pang, too numb to feel it if only it would come, but left untouched’ (*III*, p. 204). What is significant here is the lack of haptic connection and the lack of desire for such; with this news comes the removal of their mutual touch, both verbal and physical. Miriam’s voice, though like ‘hammer-blows’ resounds against nothing. She can no longer touch Michael with her words and though ready to feel the pain of this devastating revelation she is left numb – ‘untouched’. Upon her return it is evident that their connection has been severed:

But he joined her, pulling up before her with white ravaged face and hands stretched silently toward her.

‘For pity’s sake don’t touch me,’ she cried involuntarily. (*III*, p. 210)

Their relationship, which is based on the mutual exchange of words and the haptic connection these words bring, has been altered as Michael moves towards her with both silent hands and silent voice. Miriam's stark refusal to allow him to touch her has no trace of prudishness this time. Michael's revelation also reveals that his past experiences are a part of him and, importantly, a part of his haptic touch: her refusal is therefore a refusal to be contaminated by 'those women [who] were all about him' (*III*, p. 206) and by his foreignness.

They do continue with their romance after Michael's revelation, and he offers to renounce his Judaism and proposes to marry her, but the relationship is fundamentally and forever altered. However, this is not simply due to the fact of Michael's lost virginity. For Miriam, Michael's Jewishness and his Jewish views on women become insurmountable and it is she who starts to remove herself from him, mentally and physically; in her eyes they can no longer lead each other by the hand in their explorative conversations and they begin to disagree more and more on fundamental issues.

It may not be as simple as his Jewishness being the cause of the demise of their relationship; Miriam's ever changing identity and never-ending quest for her true 'self' means that she is not fixed. Her ideas continue to change and Michael's rigidity is not compatible with this flux. The very concept of femininity that Michael admires in Miriam is the very femininity which she dislikes in herself and in other women. This is not to overlook their intellectual connection and his admiration of her mind, which has already been discussed. But the discrepancy between their perceptions of femininity is what ultimately becomes a defining factor which separates them. If Miriam is searching for an independent feminist aesthetic then Michael's view that procreative 'Womanhood' is

sacred is fundamentally at odds with her position. When he asks her: ‘do you not consider that wife and mother is the highest position of woman?’ (*III*, p. 222) the difference in their two standpoints is more than evident in her reply: ‘It is neither high nor low. It may be anything. If you define life for women, as husbands and children, it means that you have no consciousness at all where women are concerned’ (*III*, p. 222). While Michael sees life in terms of the collective race (‘I would call myself one who believes in the *race*’; ‘The biggest thing that the race does is that it *goes on*. Individuals perish’ (*III*, p. 150)), Miriam can only see in terms of the individual (‘The race is nothing without individuals’ (*III*, p. 150)). Discussing the connection between *Pilgrimage* and Weininger’s *Sex and Character*, Jean Radford argues that Miriam’s feminine consciousness is first questioned when she is in Germany:

Richardson’s heroine has the same cultural heroes as Weininger – Goethe, Beethoven and Wagner – but her stay in the Fatherland teaches her that as a woman, there is no place for her except that of ‘Woman’ – Dorothea to somebody’s Hermann – and this is not a position she wishes to occupy.⁹

This crisis of feminine consciousness is catalysed by her relationship with Michael and comes to a head in *Deadlock*, the novel-chapter which, ‘represents Miriam’s anxieties not only with sexual difference but with her national identity in a discursive context in which “Englishness” is increasingly defined in terms of racial and cultural differences’.¹⁰ Although Miriam deflects their differences on religious grounds, stating: ‘I can’t make you see. I suppose it’s Christianity’ (*III*, p. 220) which Linett argues is the essential problem of their relationship,¹¹ I would suggest that this is tactical rhetoric which Miriam employs so as to root their disagreement in a tangible and utterable difference; for if she is still uncertain of her own gendered position how is she to verbalise it? However, what she is

⁹ Jean Radford, ‘The Woman and the Jew: Sex and Modernity’ in Bryan Cheyette & Laura Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture and ‘the Jew’* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 95.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹¹ See Maren Linett, Chapter 2: ‘Transformations of Supersessionism in Woolf and Richardson’, in *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

certain of is the value of her exploration and is frustrated with Michael's lack of awareness of the merit of this endeavour: 'He was not even being aware that it was a matter of life and death' (*III*, p. 214).

But it is not until *Revolving Lights* that their romance is finally ended. When discussing her and Michael's problematic relationship with Hypo, she is witness to equally chauvinistic statements from the 'big man' (*III*, p. 262). But as Linett argues: 'Much of Michael's sexism is typical of other men Miriam meets. But Miriam attributes important aspects of it to his Jewishness'¹² and thus overlooks such riling statements from Hypo as: 'The business of women; the career; that makes you all rivals, is to find fathers. Your material is children' (*III*, p. 260). When Hypo recommends that she marry 'her Jew', Miriam's negative reply is based on Michael's reasoning, that of lineage and the continuation of the race: 'I *couldn't* have Jewish children. [...] If I were to marry a Jew, I should feel that all my male relatives would have the right to *beat me*' (*III*, p. 260, original emphasis). What is salient here is the haptic aspect and its violent connotations. Linett argues that it 'indicates a racial betrayal: her male relatives have a stake in carrying on the Henderson stock, English and unadulterated' and draws upon the idea that a procreative relationship with a feminised Jew would highlight Miriam's own innate masculinity which complicates 'what at first seems merely a story of a feminist woman rejecting a sexist man'.¹³ Jacqueline Rose also argues this point and suggests that Miriam's rejection of Jewish children is more complex than a simple feminist reaction:

By having Miriam refuse to be a Jewish woman and mother, Richardson might seem merely to be adding a powerful intensifier to the feminist issue of women's right to control or even refuse their reproductive role. She is also demonstrating how this feminist agenda came partly in response to a eugenic theory of

¹² Ibid, p. 121.

¹³ Ibid, p. 128.

motherhood which stressed the importance of fertility for the future of the – best of the British – race.¹⁴

Both Rose and Linett emphasise the importance of the ‘English’ or ‘British’ race but Rose argues that ‘by calling this version of maternal sacrificial-cum-racial destiny Jewish, Dorothy Richardson also runs Miriam’s emancipation straight into some of the most vicious anti-Jewish representations of her time’.¹⁵ In this instance, Linett’s approach is based more on gender than connotations of race and she suggests that ‘by beating her, her male relatives would be righting the gender imbalance, forcing Miriam into a subordinate feminine role’.¹⁶ While this is certainly true it neglects the perceived contaminating effect of such foreign infiltration and its violent consequences. The haptic result of a marriage and offspring with a Jew would carry nothing of her and Michael’s first connecting touch which was not racially determined.



When Miriam makes the final break with Michael and escapes ‘the unmanageable burden of his Jewishness’ (*III*, p. 305), she is left not only with approaching freedom, returning to ‘her old London, as if awakened from a dream’ (*III*, p. 304) but also with the sense that she is ‘dismantled, chill and *empty-handed*, returning unchanged to loneliness’ (*III*, p. 305, my emphasis). Reminiscent of the feeling she had when she returned from Germany to the engaged Harriett, (‘She was going home *empty-handed*. She had achieved nothing’¹⁷), she is once again going forth empty-handed, with no ring embellishing her hand and holding none of its promise. However, the difference between volumes *I* and *III*

¹⁴ Jacqueline Rose, ‘Dorothy Richardson and the Jew’ in Bryan Cheyette, *Between “Race” and Culture* (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 121-2.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 122.

¹⁶ Linett, p. 128.

¹⁷ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 183.

of *Pilgrimage* is that Miriam might be returning to solitary loneliness but she is certainly not 'returning unchanged'; her sense of self and her understanding of her gendered identity is significantly more developed. Despite the demise of her relationship with Michael, from it she has grown and finds many positives as Linett argues: 'Miriam Henderson values his friendship, comes alive intellectually through conversations with him, begins translating literature because of his encouragement, and seriously considers marrying him'.¹⁸ Indeed Miriam says herself:

There are ways in which I like him and am *in touch with him* as I never could be with an Englishman. Things he understands. And his absolute sweetness. Absence of malice and enmity. It's so strange, too, with all his ideas about women, the things he will do. Little things like cleaning my shoes. But look here; an important thing. Having children is just shelving the problem, leaving it for the next generation to solve. (*III*, p. 262, my emphasis)

Even at this stage, having decided to break from him, Miriam is still aware of their haptic connection, she is still 'in touch with him' in a way which transgresses their national and religious divide. But again she returns to the biological argument and is unwilling to surrender to the patriarchal and biological determinism of his Jewishness, having children with him would simply defer the problem. Yet Miriam is also returning to her definite individualism – it is her role, as an individual, to negotiate this potential problem, even if the solution is separating with Michael permanently. Linett argues that Richardson uses Michael's 'Jewishness to define her artistic goals by contrasting her modernism with Shatov's linearity and generality',¹⁹ but Miriam too uses Michael to define her own gendered identity by contrasting her individualism with Shatov's faith in the continual race

¹⁸ Linett, p. 176. Importantly, it is Michael who enables Miriam to start writing when he suggests a 'French translation of a Russian book [...] and she should translate it' (*III*, pp. 118-9). Miriam is excited by this idea as it 'would set her standing within the foreign world she had touched at so many points during the last few years' (*III*, pp. 118-9). Already, even on mere suggestion, the haptic qualities come alive to Miriam, enabling her to 'touch' the 'foreign world' she desires. However, on her completion of a series of Russian short stories, the literary "big man", Hypo dislikes them and does nothing to encourage Miriam: 'He didn't like the stories [...] He said the sentiment was gross and that they were feeble in construction' (*III*, p. 145). It is therefore through Miriam's and Michael's haptic connection that Miriam's ability to take ownership of literature in her hands is first realised.

¹⁹ Linett, p. 176.

and his praise of procreative femininity – a conception of femininity from which Miriam certainly wants to distance herself. Michael is instrumental in helping Miriam to shape her own understanding of her feminine consciousness but in terms of developing her feminine literary aesthetic, it is Hypo Wilson who is most involved.

‘TACKLING THE BIG MAN’¹: MIRIAM AND HYPO

If, as previously noted, Hypo converses in sexist rhetoric and previous assertions are true of Hypo as they were of Michael, then what connection does Miriam have with this man who is regarded in such a contradictory manner – that of the feminised male and of the overwhelmingly misogynistic man? Maren Linett and Jane Garrity argue that the Jewish men are often represented as feminised and that in *Pilgrimage*, Miriam’s ‘feminization of [Michael] – often referring to him as childlike, delicate, and little – is superseded by her repudiation of his relentless masculinity’.² But, this too can be said of the depiction of Hypo Wilson. Hypo is often referred to in small, delicate terms – ‘the little fair square man’; ‘little square figure’; ‘fine hands’³ – and this is initially seen as a positive quality. Yet again, as with Michael, it soon ‘gives way [...] to arrogant masculinity’,⁴ and Miriam repeatedly refers to him as ‘the great man’ or the ‘big man’ (*II*, p. 110; p. 120). Described as her ‘intellectual combatant’,⁵ Hypo introduces Miriam to a new literary sphere, its associated discourse and, ultimately, comes to represent the epitome of the masculine, realist perspective – a perspective against which Miriam’s feminine aesthetic battles.

Michael’s beauty is described as ‘fully blossoming’.⁶ In Hypo, however, Miriam finds nothing beautiful: ‘the little fair square man not much taller than herself, looking like

¹ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage III* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 262. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *III*.

² Jane Garrity, *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 112. Also see Maren Linett, *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage II* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 110; p. 112; p. 113. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *II*.

⁴ Maren Linett, *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 125.

⁵ Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 61.

⁶ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage IV* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 288. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *IV*.

a grocer's assistant' (*II*, p. 110). This is Miriam's first impression of Hypo – the man who is to become her first sexual partner and to inspire her intellectually. It is H. G. Wells who serves as Hypo's "original" and with whom Richardson had a relationship which covered several years during which she became pregnant and miscarried his child. While *Pilgrimage* does discuss the possibility of Miriam being pregnant, the miscarriage is not part of its protagonist's journey; her relationship with Hypo mainly centres on the intellectual aspects. But, as Joanne Winning has commented, 'Richardson tried to circumvent the sexual, preferring to keep their intense connection on a cerebral level, and preferring Wells as an intellectual sparring partner'.⁷ It is therefore easy to transpose this aspect of the "original" relationship onto the narrative of *Pilgrimage*. Miriam is never physically attracted to Hypo: it is his mind and their intellectual debates which prove to be his most alluring aspects and earn him the title of 'the big man'. What is significant in Miriam's relationship with Hypo is the very difference of their perspectives; where she was 'in touch' (*III*, p. 262) with Michael, this haptic connection is lacking with Hypo but as 'her intellectual sparring partner',⁸ Hypo makes Miriam work to battle against often polarised opinions and in so doing facilitates the development of her theories of gendered identity, her concept of femininity and, ultimately, her feminine literary aesthetic.

With Miriam's first visit to Alma's and Hypo's home, she is introduced to a social sphere which both unnerves and inspires her: 'Everyone here was doing something; or the wife of somebody who did something. They were like a sort of secret society...' (*II*, p. 117). When surveying her room and trying to define the particular ambiance of the Wilsons' home which made it 'like a sort of secret society', Miriam ponders: '*What? It was like ... a gesture*' (*II*, p. 112, original emphasis). With this idea we are returned to

⁷ Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p. 23.

⁸ Idem.

Stephen's proposition in *Ulysses*, that the universal language of gesture holds more importance than that of language and it clearly leaves a greater impression upon Miriam than Hypo's affected 'common voice, with a cockney twang' that is consciously convoluted, 'saying two things; that was it; doing something deliberately' (*II*, p. 112). If it is 'gesture' that takes precedence over verbal language, the depiction of the hands of those at the gathering, and Hypo's especially, are invested with greater significance. Hypo's hands become important instruments of exerting control and establishing his authority over the social group:

He met the laughter with a minatory outstretched forefinger, and raised his voice to a soft squeal ending, as he launched with a little throw of the hand his final jest, in a rotund crackle of high hysterical open-mouthed laughter. (*II*, p. 113)

Hypo is depicted as both masculine and feminine in Miriam's opinion. She uses terms which are associated with women such as the 'soft squeal' and 'high hysterical' laughter which work to overtly feminise him but it is also evident that it is Hypo who holds the control of this social sphere in his 'minatory' finger and in the 'little throw of his hand'. Hypo's use of his handkerchief as a prop is also interesting ('He made little sounds into his handkerchief'; 'his fine hands clasping his large handkerchief'; 'using his handkerchief towards the young men' (*II*, p. 113; p. 113; p. 115)). The waving and gesturing extends Hypo's own command of the room, physically enlarging this 'small square man' and thus his bearing and social stature. Hypo continues to hold control over the guests, making 'a neat swift gesture, and standing small and square in the room making cordial sounds and moving his arms about as if to introduce and seat his guests without words and formalities' (*II*, p. 113). It is his hands that direct his guests and supersede verbal communication, thus making the need for 'words and formalities' redundant.

Miriam is all too aware of the expected performance and reflects that it 'would be necessary to be brilliant and amusing to hold his attention – in fact to tell lies. To get on here, one would have to say clever things in a high bright voice' (*II*, p. 113). This is not just a requirement of the socially awkward Miriam, for the performance is evident in the other guests at the Wilsons' soiree. Miriam observes the couple who are 'bent on showing that their performance was not dependent on an audience' (*II*, p. 114) and wonders whether her hosts are aware of Mrs Binkley and 'how hard she was working' soon realising that 'Alma and Mr Wilson approved and encouraged her exhibition' (*II*, p. 115).

There is a clear split between the men and women at this gathering. Much like the social occasions at the Corries, the women tend to be side-lined as mere 'wives' of important men, 'imitating the clever sayings of men, or flattering them' (*II*, p. 117). Miriam dislikes this artifice and, as with the Corries, is unable to position herself with the women who were 'sitting posed and attentive, with uneasy intelligent smiling faces; their costumes and carefully arranged hair useless on their hands' (*II*, p. 118). Not dissimilar to the 'insincerities of voice and speech' and 'all the contrivances of toilet and coiffure'⁹ of Mrs Corrie and Mrs Craven, Alma and her fellow women don 'costumes', use their femininity to pander to these 'clever literary people' (*II*, p. 117) (for which, read men), in a way that is hateful to Miriam. She affords them no credibility, rendering their efforts 'useless on their hands'.¹⁰

Despite her rejection of their performed femininity, Miriam is nonetheless anxious about her appearance and the 'scrappiness of her clothes', though she is relieved to find

⁹ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 436. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *I*.

¹⁰ In fact, she makes this connection at this gathering when one of the men moves her to recall her time at Newlands: 'he reminded her of Mr Staple-Craven' (*II*, p. 120). This cements a direct comparison between the artifice of the society at Newlands with that at the Wilsons.

that her mixture of clothes is viewed positively by Hypo: ‘his eyes seemed to draw them all together’ and she rejoices ‘in her own idea of having the sleeves gauged at the wrists in defiance of fashion, to make frills extending so as partly to cover her large hands’ (*II*, p. 117; p. 116). As ever, Miriam’s own large, masculine hands are a source of anxiety for her, and are frequently referred to in relation to social awkwardness – she is ‘too shy to exhibit her large hands and her stupidity at cards’ (*II*, p. 126) – but by ‘defying’ fashion, her efforts are not ‘useless on her hands’ and she manages to assert a sense of power which is seen in the eyes of Hypo. When Miriam ventures to engage with a young man at the soiree, she is not only thrilled at the adeptness of her performance – ‘the secret intoxicated her’ – but also feels the ‘cold waters beat against her’ as she submerges herself in the social performance and worries that in doing so, ‘perhaps I am selling my soul to the devil’ (*II*, p. 120). This links the social interaction with satanic performance, as she realises that the young man ‘had no consciousness of the cold tide with its curious touch of evil; it was hand in hand with him’ (*II*, p. 121). In her estimation it is indeed true that the devil makes work for idle hands; when ‘he seized one of her hands and crushed it between his’ (*II*, p. 121) the touch contaminates her with the ‘evil’ of the artifice required to ‘get on here’. But despite her uneasiness with ‘stepping down into the water’ of this social performance, ‘she was glad that Mr Wilson had witnessed her launching’ (*II*, p. 121; p. 120).

A sense of prudishness that is sometimes seen with Michael is also found in the early stages of Miriam’s relationship with Hypo. She recalls a letter she wrote to Eve in which she articulates her feeling that, ‘in not renouncing the friendship of a divorced, remarried man, she was selling her soul to the devil’ (*IV*, p. 229). Once again, the satanic image is evoked although this time it is not in resigning herself to be part of the social performance at the Wilsons but in the form of Hypo himself. However, years (and novel-

chapters) later, Miriam's initial prudishness has given way to a wider philosophical reasoning; she believes that an emotional haptic connection must supersede a physical one, and tells Hypo that this is the reason for not entering into a sexual relationship: 'Not because I am different. Because there is a psychological barrier. We've not talked enough' (*IV*, p. 231). Nonetheless they share in their 'mutual nakedness' and while Miriam can appreciate her own female form, her impression of Hypo's naked figure is quite the contrary:

His body was not beautiful. She could find nothing to adore, no ground for response to his lightly spoken tribute. The manly structure, the smooth, satiny sheen in place of her own velvet glow was interesting as partner and foil, but not desirable. It had no power to stir her [...] Leaving him pathetic. (*IV*, pp. 231-2)

His corporeal form renders him 'pathetic' and she longs to 'restore him as swiftly as possible to his own world' (*IV*, p. 232); however, how she views his physical difference is indicative of how she views their whole relationship: it is the contrast that is important – he is 'interesting as partner and foil' in more ways than simply physicality. Jennifer Cooke argues that Miriam's apathetic reaction to Hypo is in response to her awakening lesbian desire: '*Dawn's Left Hand* thus sets up a recognisable comparison between a heterosexual and a lesbian love affair, with the former leading to disappointing sex, miscommunication, arguments and resentment, and the latter to a deep and intense sense of shared lives'.¹¹ This is, perhaps, one of the reasons why Miriam prefers to keep Hypo as her 'intellectual sparring partner'. Finally, after their relationship is consummated, albeit with indifference, Miriam contemplates herself in relation to other women, wondering whether this experience has benefited her and yet sees that she is still similar to them in desiring 'an occupation for empty hands' (*IV*, p. 266). Even after 'the strange darkness of last night's voyaging' (*IV*, p. 266) she is left unchanged and, importantly, is still empty handed.

¹¹ Jennifer Cooke, 'Dorothy Richardson, Queer Theorist', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 4 (2012), p. 9.

What is seen to be a key point in Miriam's and Hypo's intellectual relationship in *Pilgrimage* and frequently quoted in Richardson criticism, is the discussion the pair have in *Revolving Lights* which details Miriam's (and arguably Richardson's¹²) exploration of her particular feminine consciousness and female literary aesthetic:

The art of making atmospheres. It's as big an art as any other. Most women can exercise it, for reasons, by fits and starts. The best women work at it the whole of the time. Not one man in a million is aware of it. It's like air within air. It may be deadly. Cramping and awful, or simply destructive, so that no life is possible within it. So is the bad art of men. At its best it is absolutely life-giving. And not soft. Very hard and stern and austere in its beauty. And like mountain air. And you can't get behind it, or in any way divide it up. Just as with 'Art.' Men live in it and from it all their lives without knowing. Even recluses. (*IV*, p. 257)

McCracken reads this heated discussion alongside Richardson's poem "Afternoon Tea" and argues that found in both is Richardson's/Miriam's evolving conceptualisation of the desired feminine aesthetic.¹³ In linking the scene from *Revolving Lights* with "Afternoon Tea", McCracken argues that it is a reappropriation of everyday life and that 'Richardson seeks to both preserve and transform the everyday'.¹⁴ If we are to view the 'everyday' in terms of high modernism, then Richardson's modernism revisits and revises this notion and addresses the lack of haptic connection in the masculine interpretation. If, as Miriam posits, a 'woman's way of "being" can be discovered in the way she pours tea' (*III*, p. 257) then her "being" – her 'self' – is haptically connected to her "doing/living" in life – pouring tea; whereas the masculine equivalent, which Miriam directs at Hypo (read as the embodiment of a masculine realist perspective) is quite the opposite: 'It's amazing, the blindness in men, even in you, about women' (*III*, p. 256) and, following Miriam's argument, the cause of this blindness is that ultimately 'their own lives are *untouched*' (*III*, p. 259, my emphasis).

¹² Deborah Parsons argues this point in *Theorists of the Modernist Novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf*, when she states that Miriam's thinking on women and aesthetics in *Revolving Lights*, 'presents many of the key ideas that the "Woman and the Future" essay would repeat almost verbatim the following year' (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 101.

¹³ See McCracken, p. 69.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 71.

Two of the examples Deborah Parsons cites in relation to Miriam's views on the binary of male and female consciousness directly refer to the presence (or lack thereof) of the haptic quality. The first being the 'set-piece' which McCracken discusses, and Miriam's argument that fixed views and opinions are distinctly masculine for the very reason that 'behind it all their own lives are untouched' (*III*, p. 259); the second is Miriam's earlier assertion in *The Tunnel* that men can never understand the language of women, 'when he has *not touched* even the fringe of her consciousness' (*II*, p. 210, my emphasis). While Parsons acknowledges that 'Miriam is determined to embrace that untouched life rather than to hide it',¹⁵ she does so only to the extent of observing that Miriam and Richardson want to explore and express a world that men cannot. Thus highlighting the need 'to break free from the fetters of masculine theories, values and linguistic and narrative conventions, which Richardson thought incompatible with the quality of female consciousness she wanted to convey'.¹⁶ But if we are to read this position in light of her previous intellectual explorations as seen with Michael, then it offers further illumination. The lack of haptic connection is viewed as a definite negative and throughout *Pilgrimage* it is widely associated with a certain type of male consciousness – one exemplified by Hypo Wilson. Again, this lack returns to Hypo's fixedness; although he encourages her intellectually, much of Miriam's theoretical development and evolving gendered identity is done so through opposition to his stance. It is in the very difference between Miriam's 'large hands' (*II*, p. 126) and Hypo's 'fine little hands' (*II*, p. 113) from which Miriam's feminine aesthetic development comes. Held within Miriam's 'large' hands is the capability of seeing wide vistas of possibilities, whereas Hypo's 'little' hands only offer narrower, limited, calculated and realist options. As Parsons argues: 'While it is Wilson who praises and motivates Miriam's creative development, however, it is in

¹⁵ Deborah Parsons, *Theorists of the Modernist Novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 101.

¹⁶ *Idem.*

resisting domination by his irrepressible self-belief that she is driven to express passionately and assert her own mind' and, in turn, Richardson, through her own dispute with Wells, 'shaped her novel more against than in accordance with his influence'.¹⁷

After a defining meeting with Hypo, the events of the evening (their separation), 'were already irrelevant and far away, might be left, by mutual consent, shelved and *untouched* until they should come forth to fulfil, one by one, their proper role as lively illustrations for the points of intensive colloquies' (*IV*, p. 337, my emphasis). The choice of 'untouched' is salient in that it shows the lack of haptic connection; while they might have shared a physical connection that was as far as it reached, their relationship and their separation are returned to their rightful place – subjects for intellectual discussion.¹⁸ On realisation of this, 'she braced herself against the truth of their relationship, the essential separation and mutual dislike of their two ways of being' (*IV*, pp. 336-7) and is fully aware that while their 'two ways of being' is intellectually stimulating it ultimately renders them incompatible as partners.

At the close of *Clear Horizon* and prior to Miriam leaving for the Quaker farm, a meeting with Hypo reveals the extent of her progression in terms of femininity, consciousness and gendered identity. This is read through her impression of Hypo:

Still he stood, entrenched on the hearthrug, with his hands behind his back and the light from the brilliant sky making plain every detail of his face and very blue the eyes fixed – save when he posed a question and they came to life falling upon her from a distance as she roamed about, or at close range when she halted before him – with sightless, contemplative gaze upon the quiet blue sea. And still he was

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

¹⁸ Also that their relationship and parting is 'shelved' is reminiscent both of her thoughts that 'Having children [with Michael] is just shelving the problem' (*III*, p. 262) and also of Pound's 'fragments you have shelved (shored)' (Ezra Pound, *Cantos* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), p. 32). It draws upon the idea that while the different fragments of previously lived experiences are shored they implicitly influence and inform one's present subjectivity.

holding something in reserve behind the amused comments and questionings wherewith he encouraged her anecdotes. (*IV*, p. 396)

Whilst Hypo encourages Miriam intellectually, there is something which he still holds ‘in reserve’. Whether this is indicative of the repeated suggestion that she should write or of the hold he still has over her, what is pertinent to Miriam’s development is that this image of Hypo directly relates to the opening scene of *Honeycomb* in which Miriam asserts her newly found masculine position against her father:

alone with her father, when she stood in the middle of the hearth-rug, with her hands behind her, and ordered him to abstain from argument with her in the presence of her mother – ‘because it gives her pain when I have to show you that I am at least as right as you are’ – and he had stood cowed and silent. (*I*, p. 349)

Here, Miriam’s dominant position is evident: she occupies her father’s alpha male position and dictates to him. While this usurps her father’s position, the hearth-rug can also be read as symbolic of domesticity, so in this way, Miriam is standing astride both male and female spheres by having one foot in a typically male authoritative position and the other over a typically female domestic position, thus asserting her control over both gender positions. Importantly, her hands or at least a detailed description of them is absent; in this power position though they are not in view, her hands are both literally and metaphorically “backing her up”. She is able to take the floor and assert her newly found authoritative position. So while it is Hypo who dominates this scene, it is a position which Miriam has already achieved. In relation to Miriam’s perception of the feminine/masculine dichotomy and drawing on Winning’s concept of the third sex, McCracken argues:

The figure of Wilson/Wells can be seen as part of a continuing argument Miriam is having with herself, but whereas in *Backwater* and *Honeycomb* Miriam positions herself in relation to a father figure (first her actual father, then Mr Corrie as substitute), by *Revolving Lights* she is thinking about subjectivity in relation to an idea of scientific modernity. Not only has the figure of the father been absorbed into a more sophisticated understanding of state and society, but the binary of masculine and feminine that troubles Miriam at the Corries has given way to speculation about a third sex.¹⁹

¹⁹ McCracken, p. 69.

While it is certainly true that Miriam's perception of the gendered binaries has become more sophisticated, I would argue that the father figure still remains, even if it is a mere semblance of the previous figure. Hypo's physical position distinctly plants him in the authoritative position, but the adjectives chosen ('entrenched', 'plain', 'fixed', 'sightless') place this position as one of staidness and rigidity. The fact that Hypo's stance is a repetition of that associated with the father, albeit in a palimpsestic way, illustrates that this 'fixed' masculine, realist or scientific perspective (seen in her father, Mr Corrie and now Hypo) is still something with which Miriam's own aesthetic battles. However, as McCracken argues, at this stage in *Pilgrimage* (four novel-chapters on from the scene with her father and longer in time as this was a recalled memory in *Honeycomb*), Miriam's gendered perception is more erudite; she no longer struggles with the masculine aspects of her identity and therefore does not have to engage in a battle with Hypo as she once did with her father.

Although Michael encourages Miriam to write starting with translations, it is Hypo who is the first person to urge Miriam to write something herself: 'You know you're awfully good stuff. You've had an extraordinary variety of experience; you've got your freedom; you ought to write' (*II*, pp. 128-9). But this suggestion has already been foretold:

This is what a palmist told me at Newlands. It was at a big afternoon 'at home'; there was a palmist in a little dark room sitting near a lamp; she looked at nothing but your hands; she kept saying 'Whatever you do, write. If you haven't written yet, write, if you don't succeed go on writing.' (*II*, p. 129)

As noted previously with the presence of palmistry in *Ulysses*, and considering how much palmistry was in vogue at the time, it is apt that the fashionable Corries would employ such an attraction at one of their social events.²⁰ This recalled scene from the Corries

²⁰ Mrs Corrie's interest in the occult is made apparent from the day Miriam arrives at Newlands and the mystic is instantly associated with the hands: 'Mrs Corrie was humming to herself about M  lie, as the fork in her thin little fingers plucked fitfully at the papered fish. "Do you know planchette?" she asked, in a faint

foregrounds the mystical hand and places emphasis on the potential power Miriam holds in her hands; *in* her hands lies her future career as a writer and this future is seen *on* her hands. But Miriam's views on writing are bound up with her views on being a woman writer – her right to write. After Hypo's suggestion, Miriam contemplates the task: 'It would be wrong to try to write just because Mr Wilson had said one ought. ... The reasons he had given for writing were the wrong ones' (*II*, p. 131). She is unable to integrate Hypo's views on writing with her own anxiety about such an endeavour. Linett argues that this representation in *Pilgrimage* is symptomatic of an overriding problem that modernist women writers faced; talking of Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, Sylvia Townsend Warner and, of course, Richardson, she states: 'all display misgivings about their right to write, an anxiety about being impostors in literary culture'.²¹ Miriam's reaction to writing (read as a reflection of Richardson's), Linett argues, is both that of excitement and of guilt. This 'sense of guilt' (*III*, p. 140) 'comes from a sense of transgression in doing such delightful work, from her sense that she has no right to a writing life'.²² Indeed, when Miriam consults Mag and Jan on the topic of writing and why they do not write, she is met with a disappointing reply from Jan: 'because I am perfectly convinced that anything I might write would be mediocre' (*II*, p. 166). This reaffirms her own anxiety about writing, leaving her to think that:

to dwell upon the things Mr Wilson had said, was vanity [...] It was true she had material, 'stuff,' as he called it, but she would not have known it, if she had not been told. [...] But how could they speak so lightly and cheerfully about writing? ... the thing one had always wanted to do. (*II*, p. 166)

sing-song, turning with a little bold pounce to the salt-cellar close at Miriam's left hand. "Oh-h-h," said Miriam intelligently. ... "Planchette ... Planchette ... *Cloches de Corneville*. Planquette, Is planchette a part of all this? ... Planchette, a French dressmaker, perhaps." She turned fully round to Mrs Corrie and waited, smiling sympathetically. "It's deadly uncanny," Mrs Corrie went on, "I can tell you. *Deadly*!" (*I*, pp. 355-6, original emphasis). Naively thinking Planchette – a heart-shaped wooden piece usually used with an Ouija board – is something to do with Robert Planquette's operetta, Miriam is unused to such occult party games. Interestingly, both immediately prior to and after mentioning the Planchette Miriam's attention is drawn to Mrs Corrie's hand, once again locating the hand as associated with the (sometimes 'deadly') mystical.

²¹ Linett, p. 11.

²² *Ibid*, p. 15.

Miriam does however start writing but starts with translations and not her own ‘stuff’; although this may not be the creative outlet Hypo encouraged, it does embolden her and awaken her to hitherto unknown possibilities which are now held ‘electric within her hands’ (*III*, p. 143). For Hypo, Miriam’s creative potential is intrinsically linked with her procreative potential: ‘You want a *green solitude*. An infant. Then you’d be able to write a book’ (*IV*, p. 238, original emphasis). This fundamentally jars with Miriam’s concept of femininity and drives her to the realisation that she could never develop her own feminine aesthetic on Hypo’s recommendation as it was ‘so full of his influence that there was no space wherein her own spirit could make its home. But the words settled in her mind, the promise of a bourne to which she could see no possible path’ (*IV*, p. 238).



It is not until the penultimate chapter of *Clear Horizon* that Miriam finally realises her literary potential and finds her ‘path’: ‘You have *in your hands* material for a novel, a dental novel, a human novel and, as a background, a complete period, a period of unprecedented expansion in all sorts of directions’ (*IV*, p. 397, my emphasis). She now accepts that the potential to write, ‘the thing one had always wanted to do’, was *in* her hands, that she holds the control, and that her distinctive feminine literary aesthetic would be crafted and honed by her own hands and nobody else’s. Regardless of her understanding being founded on an oppositional stance, this realisation is facilitated by Hypo: it is ‘as if he had taken her by the hand and set her beyond recall upon the invisible path’ (*IV*, p. 398). This corresponds to the idea that Richardson puts forward in her preface to the 1938 J. M. Dent & Son’s collected edition of the novel cycle, that *Pilgrimage* was ‘written to the

accompaniment of a sense of being upon a fresh pathway' (*I*, p. 10), firmly linking Miriam's realisation with Richardson's as they both set forth upon this path.

Unlike her connection with Michael, as Miriam's relationship with Hypo comes to an end, his words 'no longer had power to move her as they had done' (*IV*, p. 364). Yet it is through their numerous intellectual conversations that she develops her literary aesthetic. What is common to her relationship with both Michael and Hypo is that they are founded on a 'cerebral level',²³ yet this is markedly absent with her relationship with Amabel which is created through their 'silent communications' (*IV*, p. 317).

²³ Winning, p. 23.

THE HAPTIC PROGRESSION: MIRIAM AND AMABEL

Miriam's developing gendered identity is identified in *Dawn's Left Hand* by Hypo when he repeats, verbatim, the platitude that Mr Corrie bestowed upon her in *Honeycomb*; only this time Miriam is not 'performing' – she is 'being':

'Bravo, Miriam! Ain't she splendid, Alma? Tossing off her beer like a man and smoking *con amore*.'

Alma raised a hand to smooth her hair, and dropped the pearls she had been fingering with the other, to stifle a yawn. (*IV*, p. 173, original emphasis)

A theoretical partialist reading highlights that the difference is reflected in Alma's feminine artifice, illustrated by her hands: Alma's hands smooth her appearance and her indifference to the exchange between Miriam and Hypo is seen in her hands which are 'fingering' the pearl necklace and stifling a disinterested 'yawn'. Conversely, Miriam's hands are imbued with masculine movement as they work to facilitate her doubly masculine activities of drinking beer and smoking. This scene comes directly prior to Miriam's meeting with Amabel and signals the next developmental stage of Miriam's feminine identity. It is through her relationship with Amabel that Miriam is further able to establish her concept of femininity and, as Deborah Parsons claims in relation to Hypo, this more sophisticated understanding of her femininity can be seen to be shaped 'more against than in accordance with' Amabel's own distinct feminine influence.¹

There are scattered references to Miriam's uncertain 'third sex' status throughout the entirety of *Pilgrimage* – 'I don't like men and I loathe women'; 'You ought to be a man, Mimmy'; 'it's I who am your husband'; 'I am something between a man and a

¹ Deborah Parsons, *Theorists of the Modernist Novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 26.

woman; looking both ways'; 'amphibious';² – and perhaps the most direct reference comes in *Revolving Lights* when Miriam contemplates her own gendered position:

Within me ... the *third* child, the longed-for son, the two natures, equally matched, mingle and fight? It is the struggle that keeps me adrift, so variously interested and strongly attracted, now here, now there? Which will when? Feeling so identified with both, she could not imagine either of them set aside. Then her life *would* be the battlefield of her two natures. (*III*, p. 250, original emphasis)

Winning argues that Richardson includes Oscar Wilde as a means of instructing 'a way of reading the coming articulation of lesbian desire'.³ In a similar way, I suggest that the repeated inclusion of Miriam's 'third' and 'amphibious' (*III*, p. 250; p. 81) gendered identity is included so as to instruct the coming articulation of a new and original concept of femininity.

Drawing upon Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, Miriam's and Amabel's relationship can be read in relation to this developmental event. Lacan claims that this stage is the time when an infant becomes aware of the totality of their body and is able to possess a unified body image over the previous disjointed body image. The development of Miriam's subjectivity can be plotted to the mirror stage which is marked by Amabel as she facilitates the development of Miriam's whole view of her femininity – thus Amabel becomes her mirror. The text repeatedly refers to Amabel's reflective qualities ('Miriam read in the girl's eyes the reflection of her'; 'Seeing herself reflected in the perceptions of this girl';⁴ 'With the eyes of Amabel, and with her own eyes opened by Amabel' (*IV*, p.

² Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 31; p. 193; p. 456. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *I*. Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage II* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 187. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *II*. Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage III* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 81. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *III*.

³ Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p. 115.

⁴ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage IV* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1938), p. 190. All references are to this text. Hereafter the novel will be designated *IV*.

191; p. 231)). Miriam's gendered identity throughout *Pilgrimage* can be seen to correspond with Lacan's theory.

The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic.⁵

Miriam can be seen to go through the three stages: first, she sees herself as other, a being created by Amabel; second, she overcomes the tension between subject and object and begins a process of identification; and third, she recognises her 'self' and the fragments of her identity coalesce to provide her with a complete view of her own feminine consciousness. The negative and contrasting aspect of this process is also evident in *Pilgrimage*: Miriam is aware that her image, as reflected by Amabel, is something separate from herself. Miriam's view of herself reflected by Amabel – the Other – is recognised as something distinct from her own view. Lacan's choice of the word 'orthopaedic' is pertinent to their relationship as Amabel provides the support and aids the correction of Miriam's problematic relationship with her own feminine consciousness. Amabel is, in this sense, a (temporary) corrective crutch for Miriam. Her move from a fragmented and unsteady gendered identity (signalled by the representation of her hands which correspond with Lacan's theory: 'The fragmented body [...] then appears in the form of disjointed limbs'⁶) to a more confident and comfortable concept of her subjectivity is marked when she is 'within reach of the field of reflection of a mirror'⁷ – Amabel.

Miriam's first meeting with Amabel is at a women's club in London and the attraction is instant as this 'foreign girl' is seen as a glowing light amongst the 'styleless' English women: her 'gown glowing silky rose-red through the dusk in which the forms of

⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1980), p. 4. Original emphasis.

⁶ Idem.

⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

the other women showed no colour' (*IV*, p. 175). Harriet Wragg highlights Richardson's cinematic approach and makes the connection between the flower imagery used to signal the arrival of Amabel and the 'luminous intertitle adorned by a rose'⁸ that introduces Georgia, the love interest, in Chaplin's 1925 film *The Gold Rush*. 'Between the rose and jasmine the text is scattered with memories of flowers in springtime' which 'alerts us to the flower as the girl's sign, announcing her significance to Miriam as "love interest" in a similar manner to Chaplin's rose-illustrated "Georgia" title cards';⁹ so in the same way, the cinematic depiction in *Pilgrimage* foreshadows the coming romantic relationship. Miriam, 'attracted by the unaccountable glow' (*IV*, p. 175), is disarmed by the presence of this 'love interest' in the room and their haptic connection seems apparent almost instantly as Miriam is overwhelmed by her sense of Amabel's movement in the social space of the club. This presence remains with Miriam and when she is alone later she contemplates 'the memory of the girl returned as a teasing reminder, in a foreign voice, of a set of ideas that had ceased to move her unless they were attacked by someone holding another set' (*IV*, p. 176). So Miriam is aware of this connection and conscious that her meeting with 'this girl' has reawakened a movement which had ceased to be; Amabel offers the potential of haptic reconnection: 'And then her hands came forward, one ahead of the other, small womanish hands' (*IV*, p. 187).

Their feminine connection enables Miriam's further exploration of her own feminine consciousness and provides her with a view that she has hitherto been unable to access:

Her hands came forward, one before the other, outstretched, very gently approaching, and while Miriam read in the girl's eyes the reflection of her own motionless yielding, the hands moved apart and it was the lovely face that touched

⁸ Harriet Wragg, "'Like a Greeting in a Valentine': Silent Film Intertitles in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*", *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 4 (2012), p. 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

her first, suddenly and softly dropped upon her knees that now were gently clasped on either side by the small hands. (*IV*, p. 190)

Unlike her response to Michael, Miriam shows no alarm at this physical intimacy and wants to reciprocate the touch but holds back: ‘Miriam supposed she ought to stroke the hair, but was withheld, held, unbreathing, in a quietude of well-being that was careless of her own demand for some outward response. She felt complete as she was’ (*IV*, p. 190). While she wishes to respond to Amabel’s touch, she experiences something new: she is both ‘withheld’ and ‘held’. Miriam is able, almost immediately, to connect with Amabel in a way that she has not with other people, especially men. Being with Amabel also offers Miriam a different view of her self; she is able to see her reflection through Amabel and this is something which continues throughout their relationship:

Seeing herself reflected in the perceptions of this girl, she was unable to deny, in the raw material of her disposition, an unconscious quality of the kind that was being so rapturously ascribed to her. But it was not herself, her whole current self. It belonged to her family and her type, and for this inalienable substratum of her being she could claim no credit. [...] a portrait of herself in all its limitation, as she existed in the mind of the girl, it seemed almost as if this girl had come at just this moment to warn her, to give her the courage of herself as she was, isolated and virginal. (*IV*, pp. 191-2)

Amabel facilitates a view of Miriam’s self which is wholly different from that which she gained from either Michael or Hypo, the latter giving ‘so many other descriptive commentaries, recognizable, impersonal classifications’ of her self and ‘whatever selves he might reveal to her, selves he hinted at, none of which she had any desire to become’ (*IV*, p. 220). Contrary to this, Amabel’s view of Miriam’s self is not imposed upon her as if a scientific classification; she sees Miriam in a way the men could not and in turn, Miriam is able to view her subjectivity in a new light. While she is wary of her old self – ‘her family and her type’ – it also allows her to acknowledge her current liminal self without anxiety – ‘isolated and virginal’. Through it Miriam is able to overcome the evident distance

between them. Her ‘virginal’ self can relate to Amabel’s sexually experienced self without a sense of insufficiency.

With Amabel, Miriam negotiates a new terrain of lesbian desire and if her subjectivity is read in terms of her sexual identity then, alongside Lacan’s theory, Freud’s work *On Narcissism* is helpful. Freud links the homosexual libido with a narcissistic attitude: ‘in their later choice of love-objects they have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed “narcissistic”’.¹⁰ Therefore, the love-object (which can ultimately be read as Miriam’s feminine consciousness) is discovered in the reflective nature of a relationship with another woman.¹¹ Here the connection between the “reflective” quality that Amabel offers Miriam and the mirror found in Freud’s psychoanalytical understanding of homosexuality is apparent.¹² The repeated use of mirror and reflective images in relation to Amabel and Miriam certainly provide evidence for this connection, as Joanne Winning argues: ‘The links between homosexuality and narcissism appear to prompt the symbolic use of the mirror, in which

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *On Narcissism* in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV (London: The Hogarth Press, 1971), p. 88, original emphasis.

¹¹ Freud also expresses his theories on narcissism in women, stating: ‘With the onset of puberty the maturing of the female sexual organs, which up till then have been in a condition of latency, seems to bring about an intensification of the original narcissism’ (Freud, p. 88). This could therefore indicate that Miriam has reached an understanding of her self that is akin to puberty. This intense narcissism, Freud argues, is even more prominent in ‘Women, especially if they grow up with good looks’ (idem), however, as Miriam repeatedly refers to herself as ‘plain’ this seems to negate this ‘type’. Interestingly, Freud does state that: ‘I am ready to admit that there are quite a number of women who love according to the masculine type and who also develop the sexual overvaluation proper to that type’ and that ‘There are other women, again, who do not have to wait for a child in order to take the step in development from (secondary) narcissism to object-love. Before puberty they feel masculine and develop some way along masculine lines; after this trend has been cut short on their reaching female maturity, they still retain the capacity of longing for a masculine ideal – an ideal which is in fact a survival of the boyish nature that they themselves once possessed’ (Ibid, pp. 89–90). While this later type is certainly applicable to Miriam and would be grounds for further analysis, the fact that her enlightened state of understanding is realised *through* Amabel suggests that Freud’s theory of the homosexual narcissistic attitude is more apt to Miriam’s progression.

¹² Again, for wider discussion of this see Freud, *On Narcissism*.

transgressive sexual desire can be articulated'.¹³ As Jennifer Cooke argues, 'Richardson is reticent to give details of the physical side of Miriam and Amabel's romance' yet, 'Everything about the relationship, including perhaps the silence surrounding its absented physicality, indicates that these two women have fallen in love'.¹⁴ Miriam, at this stage, has not reached and cannot articulate a view of 'her whole current self', yet their relationship does offer potential in that it both unsteadies and liberates Miriam. As Winning argues, her initial encounters with Amabel, 'mark both her difference and the thrillingly dangerous, alternative connection she offers Miriam'.¹⁵ But equally, this stage of *Pilgrimage* and Miriam's relationship with Amabel cannot be read in binaries – heterosexual/homosexual – but instead prompts a more nuanced reading that acknowledges different sexual desires and offers a more fluid interpretation of Miriam's sexual and gendered identity. This is not to overlook lesbian desire or to say that Miriam simply exploits Amabel to achieve a greater understanding of herself but that Amabel provides a new relationship which allows Miriam to explore her subjectivity.

Miriam's burgeoning relationship with Amabel also signals the end of her time with Selina Holland with whom she had first moved in, in *The Trap* at the end of *Vol. III*. Amabel cements this end when she visits Miriam's residence at Flaxman's Court and writes the words '*I love you*' on Miriam's mirror (*IV*, p. 196, original emphasis). When Miriam is preparing to leave, Amabel's presence continually presides over this move, which is both a physical move and a mental one. In an important scene in *Dawn's Left Hand*, three thoughts and images are evoked in three sequential paragraphs. First, Miriam contemplates that 'She and Selina had left no mark on each other, exchanged no thoughts,

¹³ Winning, p. 122.

¹⁴ Jennifer Cooke, 'Dorothy Richardson, Queer Theorist', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, Vol. 4 (2012), p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 119.

no confidences, not even small gifts ...' (IV, p. 203). Her relationship – 'a marriage of convenience' (III, p. 428) – with Selina was a failure,¹⁶ it offered no reward to her sense of self and Miriam finds little to regret in its demise. The second, and perhaps most important, image is that of 'Perrance' (IV, p. 203). Mr Perrance is the sculptor who resided below Miriam and Selina in Flaxman's Court and who had violent arguments with his wife. Miriam remembers Mr Perrance, the ideals he espoused and how he and Selina both represented something from which Miriam was now far removed:

Perrance's alabaster finger, packed in her luggage, impossible to abandon or give away, a minding, undesired tribute to what in his mistaken eyes she stood for, something bred in her, remaining, friend and enemy by turns. Selina had seen and been won by it at first and then lost sight of it because she called out the self that was opposed to all its standards. (IV, p. 203)

This recalls the scene in *The Trap* when Miriam first encounters this figure who is unaware of his pantomimesque performance, who 'knows nothing of the contrast between the small figure and the big arrogance' and who she finds out to be a 'repairer of statoots' (III, p. 456; p. 457). Following an onslaught of aggrandised platitudes, he offers her a gift:

'I have here,' he patted his breast with a free hand, 'a small work, a work of my own hands, dedicated, as is seeming and suitable, to *womankind*. Deign, gracious lady, to accept the same as a token of gratitude and esteem for your presence under this roof.' With a deft movement he flung back the cape and presented the hidden object. It was the alabaster finger. (III, p. 458, original emphasis)

Regardless of the affected romantic rhetoric in which he converses and the dramatic use of his costume, he offers a gift as gratitude to that notion of femininity – Woman. What is significant here is that, in Perrance's eyes, the magnificent Woman can be embodied in a single finger; this directly relates to the concept that femininity, and wider notions of

¹⁶ Indeed she remarks on this early on in *The Trap*, when she ponders the lack of impact – for good or bad – that Selina would have on her life: 'estranged from Miss Holland, Miriam found her own life, that had stood all day far away and forgotten, all about her again; declaring itself independent of the success or the failure of this new relationship. Like a husband's life ... the life he goes off into in the morning and can lose himself in, no matter what may be going on at home. If this new arrangement were a success, something would be added to life. If it were a failure, nothing would be taken away' (III, p. 428). While Miriam views her relationship with Selina with indifference, it certainly places her in the traditional masculine role – she is the 'husband' to Selina; like the husband, she is able to separate her 'own life' and lose her self 'no matter what may be going on at home.' This distinctly places Miriam in a more independent position, one she seemingly desires, but it also makes evident the lack of connection she has, or will ever have, with Selina.

gender, can be illustrated by and encompassed in the image of the hand and its digits. The ‘mistaken’ idea of revering the procreative Woman is one held by both Mr Perrance, in his offering to womankind, and by Selina, who on hearing about the gift replies: “‘But what a *charming* tribute!’ she cried. “*Indeed*, I am surprised. Most certainly I should not have credited Perrance with so much perception” (III, p. 461, original emphasis). Both Perrance and Selina believe in and praise the procreative Woman and worst of all, both associate Miriam with her. But it is not until Miriam moves out of Flaxman’s Court and leaves the pair behind that she is fully aware of this notion of femininity and what it means. Her concept of her gendered identity is now more sophisticated: although she is part of ‘womankind’, it is ‘something bred in her’ and will forever remain as both ‘friend and enemy’. She is better able to harness the positive aspects and develop her own feminine consciousness whilst distinctly and definitely rejecting the stances of Selina and Mr Perrance and all that is associated with the ascribed position of “Woman”.

The third and final of the sequence of thoughts and paragraphs is concluded with the image of Amabel:

The strange girl [...] had triumphed, without knowing what she was doing, over the impossibility of breaking in at Flaxman’s and, unless she should suddenly disappear, would for ever represent it, the whole of it complete in all its details, lying behind the small glimpse she was now carrying about as part of her knowledge of her new friend. (IV, p. 203)

Amabel is intrinsically associated with this move to a bright, ‘glowing’ future. The figure of Amabel in Miriam’s mind is connected to her own progression in terms of living arrangements, relationship to the past and her developing gendered identity. So as her thoughts clearly move from person to person, it becomes evident that her developing feminine aesthetic is associated with those in her life: first, Miriam is uncomfortable with her femininity which is signalled by a fruitless relationship with another woman – Selina;

second, an awareness of a view of femininity that Miriam rejects – embodied by the character of Mr Perrance and supported by Selina; and thirdly and finally, a greater understanding and the prospect of a more fulfilled, future feminine consciousness – indicated by Amabel.

When Miriam receives a letter at work, written by the ‘strange hand’ (*IV*, p. 214) of Amabel, her presence is instantly invoked in Wimpole Street. Written in ‘hieroglyphs’, the letter is more than mere words on a page, for it is invested with haptic qualities: ‘It was their expression, which was Amabel’s, as much as what they had said, that had so moved her’ (*IV*, p. 216). As Michael’s words once did, communication with this strange girl has the ability to ‘move’ Miriam. Even Amabel’s written words offer the promise of the haptic hand: ‘Forgive – I watched you – in your little English clothes – go across the square – oh, my lady – my little – you terrified my heart – I hold it out to you – my terrified heart – in my two hands –’ (*IV*, p. 217). With this Amabel literally comes “heart in hand” to Miriam and she in turn recognises the haptic qualities which connect their two beings, their two selves: ‘Reality vibrating behind this effort to drive feeling through words. The girl’s reality appealing to her own, seeing and feeling it ahead of her own seeings or feelings that yet responded’ (*IV*, p. 217).

As Winning argues, Miriam’s relationship with Hypo is interrupted by the arrival of Amabel.¹⁷ In the scene, previously discussed, when Miriam and Hypo conduct their ‘experiment’ of sharing mutual nakedness, Amabel is ever present: ‘Amabel was with her, young Amabel, with her mature experience of men, who had confirmed what hitherto she had thought might be inexperience, or a personal peculiarity: her certainty that between

¹⁷ See Winning, p. 23.

men and women there can be no direct communication' (*IV*, p. 223). The difference between Amabel's experience and Miriam's inexperience is not insurmountable, in fact quite the contrary; through it Miriam is able to recognise that she will never truly connect with Hypo, but that it will be between woman and woman that Miriam will be able to truly share a haptic connection. The difference between her and Hypo's perception is made more evident in her rebuttal when he refuses to acknowledge her concept of the haptic sense:

'There's no outside that is not—'

'Yes. There *is*. We can move, see, hear, feel somehow beyond our immediate selves. We can. We do.' (*IV*, p. 228, original emphasis)

Hypo is unable to agree with this proposition because his scientific, realist perspective renders him unable to possess such haptic qualities; Miriam's assertion that one possesses senses 'beyond our immediate selves' highlights her attempt to articulate the haptic experience she shares with Amabel and signals Miriam's awakening understanding of a developed subjectivity. Equally, when they reveal their naked forms Miriam is able to view her own femininity through this new understanding:

With the eyes of Amabel, and with her own eyes opened by Amabel, she saw the long honey-coloured ropes of hair framing the face that Amabel found beautiful in its 'Flemish Madonna' type, falling across her shoulders and along her body where the last foot of their length, red-gold, gleamed marvellously against the rose-tinted velvety gleaming of her flesh. Saw the lines and curves of her limbs, their balance and harmony. Impersonally beautiful and inspiring. (*IV*, p. 231)

This links to the mirror stage where Miriam's 'eyes are opened by Amabel' to a new understanding of femininity and also to Freud's narcissism, in the sense that she can now appreciate the beauty in her own feminine form; her self-love is articulated through her connection with Amabel. This illustrates a progression in Miriam's perception and formulation of the 'self' for which she has been searching since the opening of *Pointed*

Roofs. Their haptic connection corresponds to Abbie Garrington's conception of 'the more-than-touch haptic',¹⁸ for they are aware of each other's movement in space:

Nothing could be better [...] could be deeper or more wonderful than this being together, alternating between intense awareness of the beloved person and delight in every aspect, every word and movement, and a solitude distinguishable from the deepest, coolest, most renewing moments of lonely solitude only in the enhancement it reaped by being shared. (*IV*, p. 242)

Whether alone or apart their ability to sense the other's occupation of space is intense, more intense than the haptic connection Miriam shared with Michael, for they connect on several levels including words, movement, touch. Her relationship with Amabel embodies 'the touch of reality' (*IV*, p. 247) in a way that her heterosexual relationships could not.

Miriam's possible pregnancy from her sexual relationship with Hypo complicates her relationship with Amabel and it is at this time that Miriam makes the decision to introduce Michael to Amabel and, eventually, to encourage the pair to marry. Pondering Amabel's adeptness with men, she considers how Amabel will be with Michael: 'Amabel handling a newly-met man' (*IV*, p. 287). This is reminiscent of other women's performativity such as Laurie's proficiency seen in *Voyage in the Dark* and Zoe's in *Ulysses*. Amabel is conscious of the social performance a woman must act out, she 'handles' men and is aware of the required spectacle but, importantly, does not hide her performance: 'For every one, one must have some kind of pose. For men, particularly, or one would too greatly embarrass them' (*IV*, p. 314). It is therefore unusual that Miriam would be attracted to such a woman, as until now she has demonstrated nothing but dislike of performativity. Yet with Amabel, Miriam is included in the performance and is the object of Amabel's attentions: 'not one of those with whom at other times she talked and flirted could mistake the centre of her interest [...] Why should all these people resent our

¹⁸ See Abbie Garrington, 'Touching Texts: The Haptic Sense in Modernist Literature', *Literature Compass*, Vol. 7, No. 9, (2010).

silence in our magic enclosure?’ (*IV*, p. 286). Unlike her relationships with Michael or Hypo which are grounded in verbal conversation, with Amabel Miriam is able to commune and connect through silence. Winning suggests this “silence” is a means to communicate and overcome the problem of articulating a lesbian relationship within the ‘historical frame’ of *Pilgrimage*.¹⁹ This certainly would account for the difference in the detailing of Miriam’s affair with Hypo and her relationship with Amabel; the former certainly boasting more pages of direct sexual description. So the silence of their ‘magic enclosure’, as a way of articulating their lesbian relationship, provides a space which they can share in a way that Miriam could not with men. Indeed their mutual acknowledgment of such matters as performativity (even though Amabel is more apt to play a part than Miriam) affords them greater connection; this is seen when Miriam is discussing the importance of hands as indicators of the self – ‘mittens to disguise shrivelling hands which give away even an enamelled face’ (*IV*, p. 312) – and her theories on women’s fashion to which ‘Amabel’s admiring agreement left them tantalizingly hand in hand’ (*IV*, p. 313).

However, when, after meeting Michael, Amabel excitedly recommends that Miriam marry him, the realisation of Amabel being ‘Michael’s possible saviour’ makes Miriam’s ‘spirit leap to the touch of incredible hope’ (*IV*, p. 294; p. 293). Cooke argues that Miriam and Amabel’s haptic connection is sustained throughout and even after the end of their relationship when ‘the two women retain the ability to touch again their core of connection’.²⁰ But I contend that by disconnecting herself from Amabel and connecting the haptic qualities of Michael and Amabel, Miriam believes that it offers ‘salvation on a scale magnificently beyond anything she herself could ever have offered’ and before disclosing this plan to Michael, Miriam acknowledges that ‘she must keep her hand on Michael’ (*IV*,

¹⁹ See Winning, p. 120.

²⁰ Cooke, p. 11.

p. 295). Taking the role of the puppeteer, Miriam handles the pair in a plan that not only offers salvation to Michael, but also to Miriam who will have salvation from the ‘cruelty of deserting Michael’ (*IV*, p. 291). Not only does this match-making deliver Miriam from regrets, it also offers a new future, albeit a daunting one:

The bleakness produced by the icy touch of external reality, of interest and wonder. Even now, with life stripped bare before her and all its charm departed, wonder, with its question, was still persisting. It seemed to call upon her for acceptance, for courage not so much to steel herself against the withdrawal of the old familiar magnetic stream as to push on, in spite of its withdrawal, to the discovery of some new way of being. (*IV*, p. 297)

With the reality of the removal of Amabel – the fluid and compelling stream – comes the ‘icy touch’ of withdrawal but with it also comes the possibility of a ‘new way of being’.

As with her previous relationships, Miriam starts to remove herself from Amabel; this time Miriam’s decision is deflected under the guise of Amabel’s socialist and suffragist beliefs with which Miriam cannot agree:

But she believed in exploiting feminine charm and feminine weakness, believed in controlling and managing men by means of masked flattery, scorned most Englishwomen as being caricatures of men, and pitied those who either lacked, or did not know how to use, feminine weapons. (*IV*, p. 343)

Miriam starts to see the flaw in Amabel’s persona: she rallies for the women’s movement yet uses these ‘feminine weapons’ to get ahead – Miriam dislikes Amabel’s open exploitation of the kind of femininity to which Miriam is so opposed. When it is apparent that it is Miriam who has made the move to distance herself from Amabel, her hands become illustrative of the decision:

Miriam remained alone, deep in her renewed solitude, and her hands, though now become conscious of what they were doing, could not at once cease their lingering, adjusting movements amongst the things on her dressing-table, begun automatically while she stood, ready to go but unwilling, as if the movement of external events could close its reopened avenue [...] for now they had become, since she was caught in the act of making them, the reinforcement of her unspoken response to Amabel’s silent assertion. (*IV*, pp. 350-1)

Her hands separate her from Amabel and the movements are no longer shared; they sense movement only of ‘external events’ in an unoccupied space. Because the haptic connection is breaking down (on Miriam’s instigation) her hands become ‘automatic’, evocative of Eliot’s indifferent and disconnected typist in *The Waste Land*, and illustrating Miriam’s own disconnection. They are the medium through which Miriam’s unspoken language communicates the separation and they become a visible representation of this severance. When visiting Amabel in prison, Miriam is struck by the exploitation of ‘her feminine charm and feminine weakness’, and by the very transparency of her performativity:

But why all this drama? And *why*, in the presence of this wardress, this tragic, martyred air? It was not only the prison dress, it was also partly her desire to make an impressive entry in the character of a prisoner that had made her unrecognizable. (*IV*, p. 358, original emphasis)

The performance becomes obvious to Miriam and she no longer resides in the space of the magic enclosure with Amabel. Equally, Miriam’s separate position is unappealing to the dramatic Amabel and she is, once again, aware of her inability to perform the expected role in social situations: she ‘saw Amabel register, by a perfectly normal glance of disapproval directed away from their colloquy, sideways towards the observant, long-suffering universe, impatience with her failure to play a suitable part’ (*IV*, p. 359). This time however the significant difference is that Miriam is no longer concerned with her own performative deficiency.

When Miriam makes the decision to disconnect from Amabel what is apparent is that she becomes more confident in her writing and thus her haptic connection is transferred to the pages in her hands: ‘She gathered up the scattered sheets. They seemed alive, warm, almost breathing within her hands’ (*IV*, p. 353). Her writing is now invested with animating and invigorating qualities over which she firmly holds control. Far from her early concern about her right to write, when finishing her article she is aware that it ‘was

good' and would be recognised as such: 'it lay there, alive, with its mysterious separate being. The editor would approve. Hypo would approve' (*IV*, p. 253; p. 256). This is a distinct progression from Hypo's previous disapproval of the short stories which she translated from Russian and it marks the beginning of her own feminine literary aesthetic: she has found a medium to channel her haptic qualities and is rewarded with recognition and satisfaction. *Dimple Hill* marks the culmination of Miriam's feminine consciousness and literary aesthetic.

In Chapter II, she returns to the literary conversations she has had with three of the men in her life – Michael, Hypo and her father. With her thoughts centred on the three men's reactions to her literary idol, Emerson, she is suddenly 'filled with the eager movement of delighted recognition: of sadness, nostalgia for an essential something missing from Emerson's scheme' (*IV*, p. 420); once completely consumed by Emerson's work, she is now aware that it is her own thoughts that can fill the gaps that Emerson's words made. This recognition signposts her development as her memory draws forth those eminent, literary men of her past: 'Buckle', 'Tolstoy', 'Dostoiesvski', 'your Arnolds and Emersons and Carlyles' (*IV*, pp. 416-7) and she dismisses each one (as well as Michael, Hypo and her father, from whom these thoughts are channelled); she no longer needs to turn to the words of men and their 'Precipitating doctrine' (*IV*, p. 419), as she is able to draw upon her own feminine aesthetic. This moment of recognition is reflected in Richardson's own words as she writes in the preface:

Since all these novelists happened to be men, the present writer, proposing at this moment to write a novel and looking round for a contemporary pattern, was faced with the choice between following one of her regiments and attempting to produce a feminine equivalent to the current masculine realism. (*I*, p. 9)

Needless to say, she chose the latter.



Markedly, Amabel is absent from the masculine trinity; ‘the stream of Amabel’s silent communications’ (*IV*, p. 317) ceases to fulfil the developmental process of Miriam’s literary aesthetic, which is founded on words (and particularly the words of men). Equally, in terms of constructing her femininity, Miriam moves beyond what Amabel can offer her, and although she was once representative of the mirror which allowed Miriam to see her ‘self’ through ‘the eyes of Amabel’ (*IV*, p. 231), ultimately, the type of femininity that Amabel embodies is a type which Miriam must reject in order to establish her own feminine consciousness. However, through her romantic relationships, both heterosexual and homosexual, Miriam has been able to develop her own feminine consciousness: it is not in the failure of her different relationships but in the continual exploring, often haptically, that, as Winning argues, raises Miriam’s ‘speculation about a third sex’.²¹ Finally, she is able to leave ‘the battlefield of her two natures’ (*III*, p. 250) as her feminine consciousness is no longer seen in such binary terms. This progression is enabled by her relationships, and she is able to take forth that which she has gained from her relationships with Michael, Hypo and Amabel and move to a further developed sense of self and a more cultivated concept of her femininity.

²¹ Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 69. Also, see Winning, p. 81.

CONCLUSION

So we return to the question of how to read the fragmented modernist body. By drawing on feminist theories, body studies, psychoanalysis and sexology and acknowledging and exploring the fragmentary nature of modernism, my aim has been to show the merits of theoretical partialism. This approach, which in this case closely follows the depiction of the hand, can illuminate concerns of gender, class, power, identities and subjectivity that are found in the textual representation of modernist bodies. Each of the three parts of this thesis focus on a different aspect of the hand: that of women workers; its representation in various modernist texts; and how it figures in romantic relationships. This approach was chosen as a way of highlighting the adaptability and flexibility of such a critical theory.

Key to *Pilgrimage* is the construction of Miriam's identity as a woman worker. Part I examined the representation of the hand and offered a new view of the relationship Miriam has to her working roles and the effect it has upon the construction of her feminine subjectivity and her independence. Using the Munby material as an example of the hand in Victorian imagination, such a reading sheds light on the role of the eroticised and fetishised hand in culture. The hand becomes a focus of desire but also it is apparent that the sense of possession, in Hannah's case, is a defining part of one's identity. What I suggest here is a move away from the binaries of masculine discourse that sexology produced: through Munby, I illustrated that one does not necessarily have to be either decent or deviant. Reading *Pilgrimage* alongside the illustrative material provided by Munby and Cullwick, Part I read the hand as a *pars pro toto* for the individual and offered

further insight into the power invested in the hand and how its representation helps to construct the identity of the woman worker.

In light of Munby and Cullwick, the depiction of Miriam's hands in her roles as a governess and then a white blouse worker were read in terms of the construction of her identity. Throughout *Pilgrimage*, Miriam is uncomfortable with her role as a worker; the comfort, confidence and ownership which is so clearly seen in Hannah's life is absent from the employment of Miriam's hands. Her various positions, most notably as a governess and a clerical worker, place her in an unstable position; her role as a woman worker complicates her ability to secure an understanding of her identity both in terms of gender and of class and situates her within the economic system in the undesirable and uncontrollable position of a working woman. But, by the end of *Pilgrimage* Miriam is able to achieve a greater understanding of the role of women workers and their place in society. Reading her hands in these working roles illuminates her perception in society both by herself and by others and their depiction often returns to her search for what is real. For Miriam, women workers are seen as "real" as they own a true sense of their identity but noticeably she is only able to achieve this position of insight once she is removed from those roles herself and it is only when her hands are turned to work where she is in control – her writing – that she is able fully to realise their potential.

Using theoretical partialism to approach each of the texts, Part II addressed three key thematic strands highlighted in Part I: gender, class and power – all of which were read through the representation of the hand. Part I saw these three aspects develop in *Pilgrimage* as Miriam negotiated the new working sphere where all were instrumental in the construction and perception of her subjectivity. Therefore, what Part II offered was a

contextualisation of these concerns. The fragmented array of modernist writers – Mansfield, Eliot, Joyce and Rhys – and the various narrative forms they offer was chosen purposefully to foreground this commonality. Using theoretical partialism to explore the role of the hand in modernist writing provided a metanarrative which allowed for a more cohesive investigation, illustrating that the representation of the hand is not just characteristic of Richardson’s writing but is in fact a common theme throughout modernism.

Mansfield’s “The Little Governess” is thematically close to *Pilgrimage*, and offers further insight into the problematic social positioning of a governess in terms of gender and class. Although a little more sinister than Miriam’s experience, Mansfield highlights the lack of agency afforded to women whose social position requires them to work. The hands presented in “The Little Governess” problematise the traditional perception of a good/evil dichotomy and as such, this text allows for a re-evaluation of the hand in relation to class, gender and power. Here Mansfield is seen to play with the representation and posit a new, more complex interpretation so as to highlight the complicated gender dynamics and to question the authority of patriarchal power placement.

The fragmentary form of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* lends itself well to further fragmentation, and reading the hand in the poem offers various potential perspectives on class and gender as depicted in high modernism. Here gender binaries were evident and the representation of the hand told of masculine activity compared to feminine passivity. Further to this, notions of class pervaded the poem and, at times, offered a soured view of the working classes and particularly of working-class women. Anne Tibble’s reaction to Eliot’s poem highlights such class discrepancies and suggests a theory of reading as

collaborative – whether willing or not. *The Waste Land*'s distinct poetic form and placement in high modernism highlights how the representation of the hand permeates all elements of modernist writing; the fragments of the hand alongside a generally fragmented form establishes a sense of interconnectivity not just within the poem itself but also within modernism itself.

Again we saw traditional gender dynamics problematised in the “Circe” chapter of *Ulysses*, but this time in a typical Joycean manner: gender inversions, animal transformations, necromancy, cheiromancy, magic and myth are all used to question how power and sexuality are displayed through the hands. Joyce posits the ‘universal language of gesture’ and the magical realism and theatrical form of “Circe” both play an important part in understanding the role of the hands, gender performativity and nonverbal communication as the text presents phantasmagoria alongside reality and accommodates different narrative possibilities. Asking not “what is woman?” but “what is gender?” Joyce complicates the construction of gendered identities and shows that this unsteady position is not necessarily solely associated with women but a wider concern regarding both men and women. The setting of the whorehouse further complicates gender dynamics as it sees the claws of Zoe and the fists of Bella/Bello holding the dominant positions over the men, but where Bloom does gain control over the whores is in the handling of money, thus realigning the power and control with the male. The power invested in the hand is further confirmed with the presence of cheiromancy which offers a mystical interpretation and places Joyce in vogue with the popular trend that is also seen in *Pilgrimage*.

Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* exemplified the concept of the fragmented self and prefigured the explorations in Part III. Gender performativity is overwhelmingly evident

in the women in this novel but Anna, like Miriam, lacks the adeptness of such displays of artifice. Though their outcomes and roles as “working women” differ, Anna and Miriam (like “The Little Governess”) illustrate the lack of agency granted to women who are propelled into work by circumstances outside of their control; Rhys highlights the difficulties in the social economy of working women where the boundaries are blurred over exactly what is for sale. Once Anna learns the necessity of performing the part, the disparate fragments of her ‘self’ actually work to equip her with a greater understanding of, and control, over her social position.

Employing the approach of theoretical partialism makes it apparent that the representation of hands is clearly significant in the reading of gender, class and power in this selection of modernist writing. The readings proffered from this investigation certainly ask for a re-examination of the role of the hand in other areas of modernism. This specific approach offers a new perspective in literary criticism which gives insight into concerns of gender identities and subjectivity in modernist writing. Furthermore, it firmly places *Pilgrimage* and Richardson’s own depiction directly within the context of the multifarious modernist representations of the hand.

The fragment of *Pilgrimage* which I chose to focus on in Part III highlighted Miriam’s romantic relationships; in doing so I was able to offer “case studies” of theoretical partialism. As ever in modernist writing, different fragments emerge, overlap and intermingle; rather than passing by these fragments in search of the entirety, the acknowledgement and inclusion of them allows for a more thorough understanding. Indeed this is the case with my exploration of the representation of marriage in *Pilgrimage*; readings of the hand opened further areas for consideration which included: love; different

critical models of marriage; social expectations; the economy of commodity culture, performativity in the marriage market, consumerism and subjectivity. What was seen, through Miriam's development in the early novel-chapters of *Pilgrimage*, is Richardson's critique of the conventional models of marriage and life choices available to women which then moved on, in later novel-chapters, to see Miriam developing a new feminine perspective which would provide fulfilment outside the institution of marriage. This initial investigation paved the way for a reading of *Pilgrimage* which considered Miriam's relationship to her own evolving feminine identity, her feminine consciousness and her feminine literary aesthetic and how this is influenced by her relationships with Michael, Hypo and Amabel.

In relation to Michael, a haptic reading of the text allowed insight into the difficulties of understanding the self, which was intertwined with gender and racial difference. What was most apparent here was that the fluidity of Miriam's self and the fixedness of Michael only served to foreground this. Through Michael's biological determinism and promotion of the procreative Woman, Miriam is able to develop her own feminine subjectivity which stands in opposition to his view. The threads of anti-semitic discourse and racism make reading their relationship problematic and certainly call for further investigation; but by turning to the hand as an instrument of the haptic, one is able to tease out an understanding of Miriam's sense of self and how her relationship with Michael allows her to define her own gendered identity by contrasting her individualism with his conception of femininity.

What was significant in Miriam's relationship with Hypo is the very difference between their perspectives; as an intellectual combatant, Hypo makes Miriam work to

battle against divided opinions and in so doing he further facilitates the development of her theories of gendered identity and her concept of femininity. Hypo introduces Miriam to a new literary sphere and is instrumental in the development of her feminine literary aesthetic. Although her development may have been forged in opposition to rather than in accordance with Hypo's masculine realism, it is through her relationship with him that she is able to realise her literary potential. Their lack of haptic connection, compared to that which she shared with Michael, is directed into her literary aesthetic instead, and this she holds firmly within her hands.

It is Miriam's relationship with Amabel which signalled the next developmental stage of Miriam's feminine identity. Using Lacan's mirror stage and Freud's *On Narcissism* aided a reading of their relationship as a developmental process because it is through Amabel that Miriam is further able to establish a more sophisticated and matured understanding of her femininity. The idea of the third sex which both Winning and McCracken have previously considered is useful, especially when reading the lesbian connection as influential for Miriam's gendered identity. If Lacan argues that the mirror stage is the process which establishes the awareness of the totality of one's body, then Amabel facilitates the process of Miriam's awareness of her whole self. Yet, as was seen in Miriam's previous two relationships, she soon outgrows her partner and no longer needs them to further her development; in this way, Amabel, like Hypo and Michael before, acts as a foil to Miriam's developing sense of femininity. Miriam's progression is enabled by her explorative and haptic relationships, both heterosexual and homosexual, and she is able to take forth that which she has gained from Michael, Hypo and Amabel and move to a further developed sense of self, a more cultivated concept of her femininity and a distinctive feminine literary aesthetic.



While this thesis has concentrated on modernist literature, a theoretical partialist approach would also lend itself well to the analysis of other areas in modernism. For example, film studies would be especially receivable to this approach considering the fragmented style of modernist avant-garde cinema. Again, the application of this theory to Modernist art, for example, Cubist, Futurist or Vorticist art would make an interesting study. The transferrable nature of theoretical partialism can offer the potential for new theoretical understandings of other disciplines related to modernism.

Attempting to coalesce the chaos of fragmented modernity and read it in its totality is, understandably, a fruitless task and not what this thesis has attempted to do. Rather, in its theoretically partialist approach, this thesis offers a new avenue in body, Richardson and modernism studies which considers one facet of modernism. What I put forward is a perspective which concentrates on those very fragments and I suggest that approaching and analysing the textual representation of one fragment – the hand – can give meaning to the whole, highlighting that these fragments are not merely abstract or random, but integral parts of the matrix of meaning and of the self. Therefore, by exploring the intricacies – these fragments – it is, indeed, possible to gain a more nuanced reading of the fragmented modernist body. This thesis has built upon the work of Butler, Haraway and Grosz and feminist discourse which sought to forge a new language for discussing women's bodies which was distinct from previous masculine binaries as seen in the psychoanalytical and sexological work of Freud and Krafft-Ebing. Using the hand as the starting point, theoretical partialism offers a new interpretation of how the corporeal body impacts on constructions of identity and subjectivity.

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